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The
Brides of Christ

(Sequel to *Spiritual Maternity*)

By

MOTHER MARY POTTER

Foundress of the
LITTLE COMPANY OF MARY



OUR LADY'S LITTLE LIBRARY SERIES

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FOREWORD

All of us who know the full significance of the word mother will deeply appreciate the gentle admonitions, the deep and tender solicitude for souls, breathing throughout the pages of this little volume.

Love of God necessitates a love for his creatures and a corresponding care for their every welfare. Therefore, the sacrifice of oneself for others is a natural sequence and a perusal of the maxims, instructions and admonitions contained in the following pages will assure us that the "Little Mother," the Foundress of the "Little Company of Mary" manifests her love of God in the wise counsel conveyed to the "children of her congregation."

In deed we have the assurance of her father Confessor who on hearing a recital of her many extraordinary activities for her congregation, for the poor and for people of the world, remarked that the "mother" had done nothing else than to "Love God."

May her memory therefore be kept sacred and her counsel prevail among us for our spiritual welfare and advancement.

AN APPRECIATION OF THE VENERABLE
MOTHER MARY POTTER

"MOTHER"

(Of the "Little Company of Mary")

Sometimes a stranger, traveling through a new country or through a slightly known personality, will feel its significance, its salient distinctions, more poignantly than another to whom familiarity will have blurred the very landmarks that are unconsciously loved; while, paradoxically, detail will have superseded the message of the whole.

This is why it seems worth while for me to tell the little I know of the loveliest country through which my perception ever wandered: the country of a saint's personality.

She was the Mother Foundress of the "Little Company of Mary," and during her life she was known to all who loved her,—whether Sisters or seculars—as just "Mother."

Even now, after her death, when a new Mother General has necessitated some distinction of appellation, we do not call her by the stiffer name of "Mother Foundress." We simply say "little" Mother, because her successor is tall, and it is a happy amendment, for Mother had exactly that quality of childlike, appealing naivete suggested by the word little: a something very fresh and simple which ran, like a thread of gold, through the holiness, the inflexible will, and the singleness of purpose from which she formed her own character and founded her Congregation.

As I say, I did not know her well; but, what I did know, I knew vividly.

Physically, Mother was not strictly beautiful, but her face was surprisingly attractive. I have often tried to analyze its elusive charm. I used to sit, as a child, staring at her solemnly while she conversed with my father or mother, endeavoring to find out just why Mother's face was "so nice."

I remember being impressed by a certain effect of blue distance in her eyes, as though I were not so close to her as I had thought; yet their expression could not be described by the usual metaphor of looking through me at something: it was rather as if she looked through Something at me. I remember deciding in my slangy, school-

room parlance, that it was a ripping fine way to be looked at.

Her nose was big and well cut, with the bone showing strongly, and she had very finely arched nostrils. Her mouth in repose was lightly closed, the lips only just touching, in one straight, generous line; and there was often that in its expression which, as a child, used to give me the idea "that Mother might be going to say something funny." Later, when I grew up, I learned to appreciate more discriminately the delicate humor which characterized her.

Personally, I never saw Mother except upon her sofa. I have been told, however, that she could walk—slowly and with great difficulty. She was an invalid nearly all her life, and her days and nights were often passed in pain which it is given to very few to bear. She used to sit, almost upright, upon a couch placed beside a large, open window overlooking the convent garden, and I never remember seeing that window closed. The sun would shine on her eager, loving little face as she talked and fall in soft pools of light over her long, blue veil; the wind would stir the shawl round her shoulders, and sometimes disarrange the papers on her desk, but she seemed to love them both; certainly I never saw her shut them out—but then I do not believe Mother ever shut anything or anybody out in the whole of her life.

Her accessibility was certainly one of her most inherent distinctions. Over and over again I have been in Mother's room at one hour or another; and, not only was the window always open, but also the door. The latter opened on to a convent corridor along which the Sisters were constantly passing on errands or messages; and always the Mother's door was open as wide as her heart, that her children might enter if they would. There was no permission needed from anyone else—no inquiries as to whether Mother was busy or engaged or elsewhere. One could see for oneself, through the welcoming doorway, straight to the Mother's face.

Sometimes the draught was riotous—but what of that? Unless a visitor felt it too strongly, or somebody wished to talk privately, it made no difference. It was absolutely necessary to Mother's heart that the door should stand open in order that fresh air might freely enter the room; it was even more necessary to Mother's soul that the door be open in order that her children might do likewise. Trifles such as scattered letters and fugitive sheets of manuscript were merely an excuse for exercising that quaint,

laughing patience which she showed towards all inanimate things when they had "no manners."

As I wander down the path of my memories of Mother, this accessibility stands out with the emphasis of a landmark, so much did it seem to be the counterpart of a deeper though intangible equivalent in her spirituality.

One can only grope for words into which to break a whole thought into the pieces of speech; but the nearest analogy, to me, is that suggested by untrammelled freedom. How often, when attempting to enter the inner life of some friend: to make acquaintance with their hidden and most significant self, we are brought up short by a blurred sense of barrier. These conscious or subconscious reserves vary with the personality. Some, metaphorically, raise stone walls as the boundary beyond which not even the most loving seeker may explore; with others the line of demarcation may only be the equivalent of a flowered hedge, or a ribbon of running water; but in nearly all deep natures, if one proceed far enough, one is met, sooner or later, by that feeling of halt.

Now Mother's inner life seemed barred in no direction: nor did any boundaries, apparently, enclose it. There were no walls, no fences, no forbidden territory; there were only great distances and far horizons. There were sudden heights reaching to white summits difficult to see; there were stretches and stretches of a lovely and steadfast monotony, there were lonely, broken-hearted descents into Gethsemanes of suffering at which one can merely guess; but nowhere was there any exclusion. I do not think that many people can have explored far into Mother's inner life—such spiritual immensities are hard to cover by small and stumbling souls; but one always had the instinct that Mother would—in childish terminology—"let one in to go where one liked." If one wanted to learn the entire country of Mother, one could—anyone, everyone, could. One's own limitations were the only impediment; it was one's own incapacity to press on, and see far and climb courageously which raised the only barrier between one's soul and Mother's. It was oneself who was fettered, and walled in, and reserved, but Mother was like a lovely, simple wide-openness.

And this brings us, through some elusive connection of thought, to another of the salient points in her personality—her strange and alluring paradoxes. She had a really extraordinary faculty for being two opposite things at one and the same time; and these two, apparent, con-

traditions, meeting in her, seemed to fuse into a third quality describable only by the words—"just Mother."

For example, she was quite the sweetest, most yieldingly docile person that I have ever known; but she also had an inflexibility of will—a capacity for ruthlessly overruling other people's wishes, which I have never seen equalled.

Now such contrary traits, if considered separately, are by no means unusual. Many persons can be at one time firm and at another pliable; but Mother did not seem to have her strong moments and her submissive ones. She was always determined, and yet equally was she always yielding, plastic, gentle as a child. The mingling of these two qualities can only be described in terms of result. Mother, very quietly—almost shyly—enforced an unbending will upon everybody once she believed that a certain line of action was right. But did we not all subconsciously feel that it was the Will of God which she, realizing poignantly according to her lights, enforced upon us at all costs, at the same time submitting to it herself more humbly than the lowest in the house? I am certain that in this lay the secret of her rare blending of dominance with meekness: of compelling and yet herself obeying at one and the same moment. Mother in some way gave the impression of, quiet impersonally, surrendering to her one will, very much as might one of her children; and this impression arose from an equally strong conviction that it was never precisely her own will which she was exerting.

I remember how often I used to be struck by a certain expression on Mother's face when anybody talked to her. An arresting little look of intense and loving attention that always opened up a vista of speculation in my mind as to what and to whom she might be attending. Was it to my actual words that she listened so earnestly? Was it to me at all? Myself, I am convinced that she attended all her life to only one Person under His million disguises. She knew Him through every one of them. She recognized Him under apparently blinding concealments. It has been remarked of Mother that she saw something in everybody, but perhaps it could be more truly said that she saw Someone in everybody. To me, this little recognizing look, together with the accessibility of which I have spoken, gave to Mother's individuality its special and distinctive flavour. Another characteristic which was eminently hers was Generosity in its widest significance. Generosity of heart and mind and standpoint.

Generosity of word and deed. For instance, she was one of those rare people who do honestly rejoice at a rival's success and grieve over his failure. If Mother could have prospered her own Congregation immeasurably at the expense of one day's detriment to another, she would hardly have realized that there was a choice to be made, so impossible would it have seemed to her to benefit willfully by another's loss.

Materially this generosity expressed itself in a veritable passion for helping people, and for giving them things. Everything upon which Mother could—so to speak—lay her hands, was requisitioned for this purpose. Letters, money, conversations, introductions, influence, advice—anything to help people. People of every description: the poor; the well to do; the lonely; the strange; those at cross purposes; those with impossible temperaments; people who wanted what they could not get, or were enduring what they did not want; people with plans, and people with none; people who wanted every variety of thing, from an operation to a few pennies, people who needed, or did not need hospitality; hospitality which in either case they generally received. And was there ever such golden hospitality as little Mother's? Was there ever anyone with such unlimited ideas as to what is covered by the word? It was indeed a case of what is mine is thine. Her small hospitalities were as touching—and I might say as big—as her seemingly greater ones; and into them there always crept that mystical sense of duality so inseparable from Mother: the feeling that she was doing two things at once, and one rather more than the other. Her most simple deed glowed with the significance which stood behind it. I wonder how many cups of cold water Mother gave to our souls disguised as cups of hot tea for our bodies.

How she loved giving things! Anything, everything, to anybody. She was a living illustration of that searching principle realized by so few—that it does not matter what you give so long as you do give. If the gifts were appropriate—well and good: Mother would be so glad; but better give unwanted things than not give at all. To her the giving was the momentous and intrinsic act: what one gave was comparatively negligible—mere visible symbols of the reality. It is difficult for us, with our wholly human standards, to grasp a point of view so foreign. Our idea of giving is to select a suitable object, whether in proportion or kind, and bestow it discriminately upon an

appreciative recipient: the right gift to the right man. Mother's conception of the same word was "anything to anybody"—only give, always give.

Of her personal relations with the Congregation which she founded, it is obviously impossible for an outsider to speak. It is to be hoped that some day her life will be given to the world; and only then will it be known just how much an absolutely unswerving love of God can accomplish in the teeth of obstacles, discouragement, poverty and ill-health. But even a secular may describe the exterior attitude which existed for all to see between the Foundress and her nuns.

It was not merely that she seemed such a mother to them, and they so much her baby grown-up children, but she was so wonderfully their friend. Friend in the meaning of that sensitive, profound sympathy which is independent of assurances and explanations. Friend in the most cosy and confidential sense of the word: somebody to whom could be told things too small or too silly to be brought to anyone else; things that only gained any point at all by being told to Mother. Somebody who was always eager to hear, and who wanted to understand exactly; not in the altruistic sense of being what is called a good listener, but through a purely personal affection for, and interest in the teller. One never felt how well Mother listened, but rather how much she cared. Two facts always struck me. One was: that there seemed to be nobody whom the Sisters feared as they feared Mother,—not with the timidity that cowers, but with the beautiful, upright fear which, being rooted in great love, dreads anything which could strike at its foundation. The other: that there was no one with whom the Sisters were so much at their ease—so essentially "at home." I do not know how they conveyed this impression, for they certainly did not reduce it to words; but, if one lived amongst them as I did, one felt, in some intangible way, what might be described as the atmosphere of their Mother's effect upon them. It was as though she stood to them for certain ideas of a very precious and tender and comforting nature, somewhat analogous, on the material plane, to the thoughts conjured by the words such as home, rest, forgiveness, fireside.

She was extremely prone to tiny acts of kindness: more so than anybody I have ever known. Trivial arrangements and preparations; little considerate plans, trifling messages; assentment to requests so unimportant that they almost seemed like whims. These little kind-

nesses and permissions were for the most part negligibly small: mere summer daisies among the finer flowers of her charity; and perhaps it is only now, in the winter of her absence, that one fully realizes just how softly daisies can carpet the stiff grass of daily life.

How difficult it is to describe a person. I have re-read these few pages, and I find that what I have said is faithfully exact: Mother was all these things—but she was so much more besides. She was so much that cannot be put into words: so much that, told by itself, loses the colour and harmony of the whole. I am like a vagrant artist showing sketches of some fair scenery. I cannot convey the beauty in its entirety; I cannot make you see it from the window of my standpoint precisely as I saw it; I can only work haltingly with a few, rapid, ineffectual lines, at isolated points which I remember.

I can visualize her suddenly and convincingly, almost as though I had only now left her in her bare, white room. I see her, as usual between the open door and the open window—the beloved little figure so pathetically erect upon its couch of pain. I notice, abstractedly, certain material objects—just as I used to do—the roughly soft texture of the white shawl covering her shoulders, against which the red braid from which the Crucifix hung made such a striking splash of colour upon her breast; the long, pale blue veil falling straightly and smoothly to either side of her, the ends gathered round her, over her lap, like a cloak. I recall her face: very tired, very loving, and alive with that wonderful little listening expression. I can see her bending forward—she had a way of bending forward when she talked—and then I have said something, or she has, there comes a very faint smile, a slight turning of the head, and—her favorite ejaculation—“Dear little Jesus!”

A certain priest, one who knew Mother intimately, spoke of her to me after her death. I had been commenting on the extraordinary activity of Mother's life. How, chained to her sofa, she yet accomplished so much: for her own Congregation, for the poor, for people of the world. I alluded to her foundations in various parts of the earth: to her writings: to her work in the interests of nursing. “She did so many things,” I remarked. The priest who knew her was silent a moment, then he said: “You are wrong. She only seemed to be doing many things. In reality she only did one thing throughout the whole of her life:—she loved God.”

—Ruth Lindsay, in “The Month” Magazine, Nov., 1919.

THE BRIDES OF CHRIST

PART ONE

THE SPOUSE OF JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

CHAPTER ONE

THE SPOUSE OF JESUS

Quae est ista? Who is she? Consider the angels. Angelic intelligence alone can fathom the beauty of this work of God. What work? That Passion flower of Jesus, His true spouse. What is she? An atom God created! He drew her out of nothingness! Far, far in the mind of God there was this conception of a lovely being. She was to be the fruit of His Passion. She was to be formed and nourished by His precious blood. She was to be the spouse of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. By the grace of that life giving sacrament she was to live her blessed life. Through that holy sacrament she would be strengthened for her life on the cross. She was to be known by the angels as the spouse of Jesus crucified, and the cherished object of their love. Who is she? She is the Bride of Christ!

Dear Sisters, in moments of wavering, of uncertainty, when there may be hesitation in soaring into the higher altitudes of perfection, or some weakness of the will inclining us to evil, some yearning to look back or hearkening to the voice of nature, then lift up your spirits into the company of the angels. Look forward to that eternal life when your whole being will be united forever and forever with the Source of Life whence you came. Then those choirs of angels, who watched you so tenderly while on earth, will sing the praises of the most high God; will proclaim His mercy to that creature whom he drew with His Everlasting Love from the earth, and exalted to heaven that she might adorn His Heavenly Kingdom as the Bride of Christ.

Poor little ones of earth, toiling, perhaps, under a tropical sun; laboring to civilize those of God's creatures who know Him not; watching by the bedside of the unbelievers; remember always that you are the Brides of Christ. Yes, you must remember this even before you think of that great grace vouchsafed to sinful creatures of earth: that great grace of union with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Always, always our union with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament must be before us, for it is only by this union we are able to follow Jesus on the Way of the Cross, and be wedded to Him in that wonderful mystical union of His passion that makes us the Brides of Christ. This is our grand vocation, and for it we need the heavenly food of the Blessed Sacrament. We need to know Our

Lord in the breaking of Bread. We need to feed upon Him, to take our life from Him, to be enamoured with His love, "to love the place where His Glory dwelleth," to take to ourselves wings and to be at rest at the foot of His Tabernacle, to wait with eagerness the morn that is to bring Him to us, to link our souls with Him, to make us one with Him forever.

Dear Lord, Who lovest to nestle in the hearts and souls of those who love You; who love naught but You; who are Yours entirely, make us ever Thine!

Only they are His true spouses, who, enamoured of His beauty, have said with the young virgin martyr, St. Agnes, I have no other love but Jesus Christ. May that gentle Christ be ever loved more and more by His consecrated ones, the lilies of His precious blood, the Brides of Christ! May they increase and multiply a hundred-fold to delight the Sacred Heart of Jesus, their beloved! Yes, Oh Spouse of Jesus, spend your time at the foot of the Tabernacle. Come with your soul pure and clean for your Divine Spouse.

Not mere sentiment should prompt your love for the Blessed Sacrament. You need this strengthening food if you would be firm and walk faithfully in the steps of Jesus to Calvary. During the day visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament often. Refresh your spirits and strengthen your soul every hour of the day with Spiritual Communion that will make you yearn for the holy hour in which He will come to you. Prepare well for your daily

Communion. When entering the Chapel say: "Jesus is coming on earth for me! He will enter one special Host for me! He will be consecrated for me! He will come on the altar to be born again for me! Oh, Sweet Jesus! Unworthy though I am, abide in me! Grant that I may never be separated from Thee who hast done so much for me!"

Our whole body and soul, our very life depends on the Blessed Sacrament. We must be penetrated with Its Virtue. It must live in us, we must exist for It. We must breathe Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. We must love to be near Him. We must increase, not diminish our visits. We must go to Holy Communion day after day, with increasing preparation, never relaxing therein, because we fancy that we have acquired some habitual union with Our Lord in the Sacrament of His Love. If we should ever weary, we must then urge ourselves on by every kind of pious practices. Pay more visits, make more spiritual communions and keep offering our Lady's dispositions. Make the intention that every time you recite the *Ave* you will make the words *Blessed is the Fruit of thy Womb Jesus* a spiritual communion.

We cannot please Our Lord better than by bringing Him the dispositions of His holy Mother. We immerse ourselves in the splendor of the Immaculate Conception of our Lady, offering that rare privilege to Our Dear Lord and thanking Him for it. We assume to ourselves the maternity of our Lady, watching with her over the Babe of Bethlehem, working with her in the cottage at

Nazareth, following Him in His public ministry throughout Galilee, and finally standing with her beneath the Cross on Calvary.

It may be sometimes we are left cold with few thoughts, because, perhaps, we depended too much upon our own devotion. We might think we were getting very angelic in prayer, whereas we are losing humility even in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Rather should we approach Him in all our spiritual poverty, relying on the dispositions of Our Lady, and truthfully acknowledging that our highest dispositions cannot honor or worship God like those of His Blessed Mother, who was favored above all. Ah! Mother bring thy children to Jesus! Keep us at His feet! Mother draw your favored ones close up to His Sacred Heart! Hearken to our Mother's answer: "Only those of my children who will be crowned with thorns; whose hands and feet will be pierced with nails; whose flesh shall be scourged and whose heart pierced with the lance—only those shall have a special place near to the Heart of my Jesus! "Sisters Dear, will we have that special place or will we refuse it? If the Mother asked you, you would answer generously, you would refuse Jesus nothing. You want to delight His Heart, no matter what it costs you. Ah then, Dear Sisters, loved ones of God, if you would be Spouses of Jesus Crucified, love Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament for you can only be united with Him in the Sacrament of His love."

For a great purpose has Holy Church instituted the ceremony of profession of perpetual Vows,

which entitles you to be the Spouses of Jesus Glorified for all eternity. As you pronounce your Vows, the Blessed Sacrament is held before you. It is to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament you are bound. You are face to face with the Word Incarnate. The gates of the Sanctuary are thrown open to you, and the Blessed Sacrament is given you for your very own. Jesus is yours! Jesus Our Lord! No one can take Him, your Beloved, from you! You exulted in your heart, "He is mine, my very own!" Then you thought nothing would ever trouble you more. Bride of Jesus, on that occasion, the angels chanted it—Bride of Jesus—pityingly, as well as jubilantly, for they know poor human nature. They know how hard it is to rise from that trance of love on Jesus' bosom and keep the watch on Calvary. They have seen the most loving souls fail their God.

Dear Sisters, ever remember this as you rest on Jesus' bosom, and whilst leaning on His Breast plead earnestly to be faithful. "My Jesus keep me! Jesus, your little one looks with envy on those holy virgins close pressed for ever to Thee! They were faithful on Calvary's heights and now walk with Thee forever! They now reign with Thee, rejoicing that they are a joy to Thee forever and forever! Oh, sweet heart of Jesus, give me the grace to be ever faithful to Thee, and grant that I may one day walk after Thee in the company of all your holy Virgins!" Oh! Blessed Ones pray for us thy sisters on earth, who would be firm as you were, that we fail not. Help us by turning now

to Jesus, and plead for us by the Blood of His Heart.

We would not be half-hearted, half for this world and self, and half for Jesus. Ah no! We would be wholly God's, the precious fruit of Jesus' Passion. My God! Would we could see ourselves as the angels see us, our dignity, our greatness! As we view our state, its privileges and its rights, we sink in the depth of our own vileness and turn to lean upon the great power that gave us life. It is thus we return again to our God—God on earth with us. Jesus thou hast made Thyself one with us. Keep us. And the Voice of Our Love speaks to us as to the favored one who first heard those words: "Think of Me, daughter, and I will ever think of thee."

There is, dear Sisters, union of thought with Jesus. Ah! how much it means! All our thoughts are treasured by Our Lord. We have many mental gifts to offer Him. We have always the power to think thoughts in union with our Love. What are they? They are the very essence of ourselves, our spirit. They beget good or evil deeds. My God, may my thoughts ever be centered in Thee! There is only one means, dear Sisters, by which we can keep up our thoughts from grovelling in the mire of sensuality, by which we can keep breathing what Father Faber calls "That high mountain air," and that is—The Blessed Sacrament! We cannot be nuns, we cannot live the life of union with Jesus, without He Himself supports us, and holds us in His arms. We shall fail, we shall fall, we shall

become dry without Him. *I am smitten as grass and my heart is withered, for I have forgotten to eat my bread.* Ah! Yes, well impressed with this thought we shall wisely walk in the desert ever leaning on our Beloved.

Quae est ista? Ah! No tongue of mortal can tell who, or what she is, or what is her worth to God! If the angels in wondering adoration ask this question, can we answer it? They know all things better than we do, yet even they are lost in wonder at her beauty, for she is impregnated with the glory of the Blessed Sacrament. Again and again must I repeat it; a true spouse of Jesus must be united with Him in His Sacramental Life. She cannot live as a spouse of Jesus should live without this union, for union with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament makes easy what would otherwise be so difficult to our unaided human nature. Yes! The nature of Jesus, His Life, His Blood, is given to us in the Blessed Sacrament, and we are raised above ourselves. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all things to Myself." Thou hast drawn us, Dear Jesus, and we have come to live with Thee upon the cross; to be molded into a work of Thy Holy Spirit; to be known as spouses of Jesus Crucified, but, Oh, sweet Jesus, we must first be spouses of Thine in Thy Sacrament of Love ere we lean upon Thy Breast with Thy beloved disciple and hear the pulsations of Thy Sacred Heart! Oh, dear Jesus, we need to be thus drawn closely to Thee, if we would live with Thee upon the cross, and feel those other beatings of thy crushed heart as they come and go

with intermittent throbs in Thy Death Agony!

Cultivate this union of thought with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament by frequent visits, by receiving Holy Communion daily, or as often as allowed, and by constantly making spiritual communions, which, we are told, merit Grace more precious than pearls of great price. Though we have said this before, we must say it to you again, as we say it to ourselves: "The Spouse of Jesus must live by the strength and grace of the Blessed Sacrament."

It is certainly true, dear Sisters, that as the body is nourished by its corporal food, so the soul must be nourished and strengthened by the spiritual food of the Blessed Sacrament. Indeed, we are told, the Blessed Sacrament will be visible in our glorified bodies in Heaven. St. Gertrude speaks in terms forcible, wonderful when she exclaims of Jesus, "bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh." We hesitate and wonder. Can we use the words of the Saint as she used them? We are timid! We look into Jesus' face, realize we are in His presence, breathe the perfume of His sweet Sacramental life, and we too whisper "bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh."

Surely, for religious, is Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, a model, sweet and gentle. There is an atmosphere of Jesus around the tabernacle. Ah! There seems to be something of the silence of eternity around the monstrance as Jesus is exposed on His throne! We linger; we are loathe to leave Him! It is wise, it is well! We work for Him

here, as well as at our other duties. This is the first duty of Jesus' Spouse; to be part of His court on earth. She must be in constant attendance; she must be here to await His bequests and to receive instructions regarding His commands. Her life work, her eternal work, is here. She must physically leave that hallowed spot, but her heart must remain there spiritually. Jesus must take all her delight, for He glories in dwelling with His lilies of the earth. Their perfume has an exceedingly sweet odor to Him; a fragrance that savors even of Heaven.

Faith and Hope are found shining in Mary's children with some little of her own brightness. It is a reward she gives to better fit her Own to be The Brides of Jesus, as long as they dwell in humility. Dear Sisters, while we remember our evil natures, we should be ever clothed with our mother in double clothing; for we are clothed also with the garments of Our Lord Jesus as long as we do our part. The glory of Jesus, the treasures of His Sacred Humanity are ours, as Mary our Mother, mirroring His perfections, covers her children with her purity, her meekness her humility. Mortification and a spirit of penance is necessary to shine with our Mother's purity; gentleness to all around; meekness and patience striving for good brings the odor of Mary's sweetness, and diving daily into our own nothingness brings us her true humility.

Dear Sisters, strive to deceive no one. God sees us, knows our every thought. One penetrating ray

of His light reveals us to ourselves. We know we cannot put on our souls religious virtues or religious hearts, as we put on our bodies religious habits. We know to be clothed as religious would be a mocking hypocrisy, unless the garb of penance we wear exteriorally betokened the spirit of penance we have attained interiorally. We do not want to be whited sepulchres. If we wear what betokens that we are consecrated to the Heart of Jesus, we must be striving to keep our hearts in union with the emanations of His Sacred Heart. If we wear a veil of blue, typical of Our Lady, we must urge ourselves to imitate her and be Mary like. Strive to imitate her; be solicitous that all about you be more pleasing to Jesus and His holy Mother. Most especially should this be of our own family, and by our own family, we mean all the Spouses of Jesus.

We should indeed be sisters in religion, all animated with love for one another, each anxious that each flower (that is each religious body) should bloom to perfection after her kind. We should grieve at any deterioration in the religious spirit among those who live close to the Heart of Jesus. We deceive ourselves if we think we are true Spouses of Jesus, which means one in union of heart and soul with Our Lord, if we lack this sisterly affection for other Communities. If we find that we do not love other Orders, other Sisterhoods, with some little love of the Sacred Heart, how can we think we are Spouses of that Dear Heart? When we want to please a mother we show

love to her infant, or bring presents to her children, so the Spouses of Jesus must be in harmony with His Sacred Heart and love all His children.

The spiritual combat, dear Sisters, goes on all our lives, we have to fight the good fight for which we hope to be ultimately crowned. We have to be brave, valiant, courageous; we may bravely do penance one day, but we cannot leave it off the next day because we feel cowardly. If we go by our feelings and are led by them, they will drag us down to hell.

We must be on our guard against despondency and faintheartedness which at times comes over us. Look into the heart, its roots are in self-love. We sometimes look at Grace as part of ourselves, rising out of our own nature, whereas it is a free gift of God. He gives it to the one who cries out to Him: "Oh God! I am needy and poor, help thou me." Only the humble of heart receive the grace of God. The Grace of Jesus is poured into them. It does not rise out of their nature; it is given to them from that dear Sacred Heart of whose fullness we have all received.

There is a lesson that should be learned today, tomorrow and every day, for only by having it strongly imprinted upon our minds, and putting it in practice, will we advance spiritually. It is the constant going to our Dear Lord when we feel needy and poor and taking help from Him by means of the Sacraments received, really or spiritually. We can receive Holy Communion but once a day, in reality, but any number of times during the day

will our Dear Lord spiritually raise His hand in pardon, absolution, benediction over us; many times will He clasp us to His Heart and feed us with His most precious blood if we but ask Him.

We may at times feel perfectly helpless to overcome some temptation, to bear some cross which seems impossible to carry. It is as though we were spiritually paralyzed. We try to argue philosophically; we bring to our minds many good thoughts; we recall wise and prudent advice that has been given to us, but to no avail. Thus we may remain undisturbed, uncomfortable, even guilty of a certain amount of venial sin, vacillating in our weakness, lacking true firmness. Suddenly a ray of sunshine comes to us. An angel whispers we are weak because we forgot to eat our Bread. *I am smitten as grass and my heart is withered because I forgot to eat my bread.* We turn to Dear Jesus, we take from Him, by means of a fervent spiritual communion, what we want; whether it be patience, resignation, fortitude or whatever may be our need; and where is now that block, that stone that was in our way? It is rolled away. We are strengthened, hopeful, wiser from our weakness.

It is well for us to know that our whole strength, our whole life is in Jesus and derived from Him. Let us learn our lesson well, and never need another to prove to us where our strength lies. With St. Paul let us say, *I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.* With this motto sunk deeply into our souls we shall conquer all difficulties, we shall fight the good fight well, and strive with the world,

the flesh and the devil, not only for ourselves but for others. We shall then be fruitful spouses of Jesus; we shall give Him children; we shall conquer even hardened souls by the grace that He will give us, because we shall know so well that it is not ourselves but Jesus who conquers in us.

It is most certain that those who conquer themselves have a power to conquer others. How necessary then is this power for us whose one end and aim in life is striving after our own perfection. No pain should be, and no pain shall be too great to do our work for our Lord, and to bring Him children for whom He died. For this will we labor in our own souls, sparing no pains. Why should we be lukewarm; no profit comes from it, no peace, but with an earnest persevering will, and that dependence that our dear Lord so loves, we shall win souls because we shall have Jesus within us.

Again and again we have failed, because we have not leaned sufficiently on our Lord. We find that we have become remiss because we have lost some grace. It is not so difficult to discern when our fervor is growing cold. It is a sure sign that when we do not love others as we once did, do not love to do acts of kindness for them, that the God of Love is not reigning in our souls as He should be. If Christ is not king over your soul what a dull life you will lead? Especially is this true of religious if their souls burn not with the love for others, or if they are not constantly employed in acts of kindness. In this state of tepidity their

prayers may be a delusion, also, a worship of self rather than a worship of God.

Now of all whom we should love are there any whom we should love as our own Sisters in religion? Are they not Sisters of the Sacred Heart, the same as we are? Does He not love them with that love of God which has drawn them into existence? Has not His Mother a Mother's love for all? Does she not care for them as lilies of the Precious Blood? And if She loves them because they are so dear to Jesus, must not also we? It is indeed incomprehensible how Jesus' Spouses who should be so near to His Sacred Heart, loving therefore all It loves, are not attracted with this love for all the great Communities in God's Church. We can simply say that if a Sister has not this love for all the religious Orders of the Church she is not near to the Sacred Heart, not even as near as seculars. The ordinary good Christian loves religious Orders and strives to help and benefit them, thereby drawing close to the Sacred Heart. Therefore, should the religious Orders love one another, and take an active interest in one another's doings. "My little children," said Christ, "love ye one another, for by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples."

The young members of the Community, especially the postulants, should be taught this necessary foundation of a true religious spirit, that they may not fall into any petty womanly spite, quite unbecoming the nobility of mind and purity of soul of a true Spouse of Jesus. Meditate on this, dear

Sisters! I do not say that there is much need of this warning, but history tells us of petty strifes between religious orders, and, occasionally, in our own day, we have known such cases, but they are not the rule, thanks be to God, but rather the exception. As for ourselves, we would like to thank publicly many religious Orders, both as a body and as individual members, for much assistance given our young Community. We implore Almighty God to bless with His choicest graces all those loved Sanctuaries where He has taken His delight. We think of those whom we know best, and, yet, pray for all.

There is joy and quietude of spirit in thinking of the holy places where Jesus is entirely loved; where each Community, in their own special way, according to their own rules, and by their own work; work inspired by God's Holy spirit and given them to cherish particularly; labor to accomplish His Holy purposes. Ah! as the tale of man's misery, the oft repeated story of sin and sorrow is recounted to us, where we see the flood of iniquity inundating the world, and sparing not even the homes of the good, how glad we are to know that God reigns in some parts of His creation! God still reigns because love still reigns, and where love reigns there is indeed a foretaste of heaven!

The Spouse of Incarnate love must be all love, and, advance as we may in the queen of virtues, charity, still we have little idea how far we are from its perfection. We sometimes catch a glimpse of it that shows us how imperfect is our charity,

because charity is not simply patience, benevolence, generosity; it is a real turning of the heart to a loved one, and the giving all possible good to the object loved. Charity is union of heart and soul with the object beloved, and this charity, when perfected as it will be in heaven, makes us rejoice in another's happiness as though it were our own. "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up;—Is not ambitious; seeketh not her own; is not provoked to anger; thinketh no evil;—Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth;—Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 C. 13 4-7). "Charity never falleth away; whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed" (1 C. 13, 8).

CHAPTER TWO

QUAE EST ISTA?

FIDELITY TO GRACE

O glorious St. Michael, children of earth rejoice with you! The Brides of Christ exult because thou didst stand firm when others fell! O victorious St. Michael, help us on earth, strengthen us to be faithful!

Fidelity is summed up in being faithful to God in the hour of trial. God Himself is never wanting on His part. He gives all that is necessary to us, and more fidelity to every Grace is all that is lacking in us.

Dear Sisters, whom I so love, Brides of Christ in every land, hearken to an echo from the Heart of Jesus. "Love is in my Heart"! I ask you through the love I bear you to listen with love, as I write with love, and bear with me if it seems one speaks who has no right. Let us examine ourselves in the full light of the Sun of Justice, our own dear Lord, "Jesus Corona Virginum."

What are we? What should we have been if we had been faithful to every grace? Here is food for humility. Here is occasion to kneel at our Lady's feet, penitently saying with bowed head, "We have offended against the Divine Justice, the Majesty of our Lord; we have neglected His holy inspirations; we have squandered our patrimony;

we have hidden, maybe we have lost, the talents God has given us; we have used His money for a purpose He has not given it." My God, what a vista opens up before us, we who had no thought of classifying ourselves with the prodigal son, what a wholesome shame creeps over us; we who could say with St. Peter, *depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man!* However, we feel we must draw nearer from our very need. We must draw closer to Jesus humbly, saying: "For I, O Lord, am needy and poor, help thou me!" God never resists the cry of the humble heart. He inclines towards us, like the mother to the weak child, who is ever anxious to feed and nourish it. Our Jesus draws His loved one to Himself to strengthen her, and the child of earth is renewed again in spirit.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who brings back the strayed one, for, Dear Sisters, we stray more often, and are more often pricked with thorns than we imagine. We think God is trying us, and proving our fidelity, when it is only we ourselves who are unfaithful to Grace. We think we are martyrs when we are but nurturing self. We are wounded, yes, we are pricked with thorns, but they are not the thorns of Jesus' Passion; rather are they stings of wounded feelings. We go about foolishly deluding ourselves, and striving to delude others, into thinking that we are greatly injured beings, seeking sympathy for imaginary injuries, rousing improper feelings in those who pity us.

Ah, how foolish we are! Why do we deceive ourselves! Why not let the Good Shepherd extri-

cate us from the entangling bushes in which we have been caught as we strayed from the high road, the level path of perfection? We are led into the byways by taking the wrong direction. The signpost is very clear for we have our Rule, the living Rule and the written Rule, but we follow our own way or some will-o-the-wisp. Then we do not like to retrace our steps; are afraid to admit to ourselves or others that we had made a mistake; hesitate to acknowledge it even to our dear Lord Himself and so, full of our own conceit, we would not have our wounds dressed nor the thorns picked out.

We are inclined to think we are suffering for God's Love, but if we are willing to persuade ourselves in this manner we can not persuade others for the most imperfect soul can tell the difference between the imaginary sufferings of falsely wounded feelings, and the saintly patience of those who go hand in hand with God.

Dear Sisters in Jesus, we who teach others, and perhaps speak eloquently at times to the souls that cross our path concerning the strayed sheep or the prodigal son, might sometimes apply with profit our own words to ourselves. We have strayed, perhaps oftener than we know, from the narrow path of rectitude that led to the mountain top of perfection. We have, no doubt, wasted the treasures entrusted to us; those spiritual goods far more valuable than gold or precious stones. We must not say we **may** have strayed for we know we **have**.

We have all had sufficient graces given us to make us saints, therefore as we are not saints it is evident we have lost many graces. God entrusted us with priceless heavenly gifts which we neglected.

Here is food for humility! Here let us stop to humble ourselves! Here let us despise ourselves more and more, until we have almost penetrated into the nothingness from which we sprang!

Let us now penetrate into the depth of sin and ignorance in which we were born; the coldness and changeableness of our nature in its present state; our lack of correspondence to God's graces, and we shall find ample reasons for humbling ourselves and greatly changing our attitude to God.

A strong foundation is necessary for every structure. Perhaps we know that the foundations of our spiritual lives are not sufficiently secure.

Dear Sisters, as we penetrate deeper into the Mind of God, and view His conception of a Spouse of Christ, with all its powers and privileges, with the rich prerogatives, the supernal graces attached to the state, we shall need to remember what we are, and strive to realize what God intends us to be. Here we must stay awhile abasing ourselves in the thought of how little we have corresponded with the will of God in our behalf, for, if we had humbled ourselves and used punctiliously the means of holiness offered to us, in the religious state, by Holy Mother Church, the Incarnate Word would now be nestling in our souls with rapturous love.

Consider the Eternal Word becoming Man and taking human nature to Himself! Where does the Word become Incarnate? "The Word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us." This is the great answer given in Holy Writ. Jesus came on earth to seek and save that which was lost; to regenerate mankind; to restore fallen nature; poor fallen nature that blights God's Work so easily, and the only home Jesus asks on this earth is our human hearts.

In our poor way we understand all this. We love to be near those we love. All perfection consists in union with Jesus, and, Dear Sisters, how far are we advanced in that perfection? How do we keep Dear Jesus with us in thought, in word and in deed? Are we really united in heart and soul with our Love? What does it mean? It means thinking as He thought, doing deeds that He did, and walking in His steps. What are we in religion for if not for this?

We are going to look at our position in God's Church squarely. We are going to meditate again and again upon its dignity; the office of the Bride of Christ in God's Church; her power and her privilege, nay, even more, her rights; and we want to look upon all this in a new light, and the way to attract God's Light, God's Grace, God's Holy Spirit, is by humbling ourselves before Him. We have enough to humble ourselves, if only in this one thought, that if we had corresponded with all God's Graces, we should be now living Saints, such as those eight, who the Cure of Ars was told would convert the world if that many could be found.

Again, dear Sisters, by our neglect of Grace and our infidelities we may be hindering souls from being saved, instead of keeping this beautiful world from sin. We might have had a great part in its conversion, but our selfishness has hindered us from corresponding with God's Grace, and we may indeed say that we are unprofitable servants. What profit have we brought to Our Lord for the talents He has given us? We have squandered them or hidden them in a napkin, or lost them through negligence. One thing is certain, that the best of us have not always used them well for the purpose that they were given. At least let us now do the one thing we can: humble ourselves. Be truthful with God and ourselves, and thus humbled and contrite, our souls will grow pure and have a beauty that will attract Dear Jesus to them.

“My God! I promise Thee that from this hour all that I have is thine.” Then the sweet Voice of Jesus will speak again to your soul as It spoke years before, but with a new meaning, “My Child, give Me thy heart!” We gave Him when we thought He asked us, our bodies, if we may express it. We gave him our personal liberty. We would live here or there, wherever obedience called us, and do the work obedience gave us, but we did not see that obedience was not all, not half, indeed, that Dear Jesus asked of us. “My child, give me thy Heart.” It was our hearts God asked from the center of our being. “My God, I gave Thee my heart,” we responded.

Let us see, Dear Sisters, if we have kept our compact. Peer out into the eternal aeons before the creation. What was God's conception of us? We cannot comprehend it. We find it impossible with our puny minds to enter into the Omniscient Intelligence of God, and, consequently find ourselves before It so poor, so weak, so unworthy of God's notice as we do in our commune with the Sacred Heart, that we are glad to think of the thousands of loving Souls who love our Lord better than we do. Abashed, we hide ourselves away from His notice but we rejoice in His immeasurable loveliness and in the innumerable souls who love Him. Then it is He seems more lovable than ever. He is the kind Host at the Feast searching out each visitor, welcoming each and not letting the least remain unnoticed.

Jesus, God and Man, has each of us before Him in a way that none but the Great Creator could have thought and known, with a love that human mind cannot fathom and human heart cannot feel.

Daily the Spouse of Jesus increases her love of her Lord, for all that she sees of good in those around her she knows has first sprung from the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Without this love of Jesus we cannot keep to our high state. Without it our souls would be made void. If we attempted to give up all earthly love without replenishing our hearts with the Divine flame, they will fill up with self-love alone.

It is wise to try to increase our love of God by all means possible, especially by the thought of God's everlasting love for us. All love is a faint shadow of that Infinite Love from which we came, and to which we go. It is this love that created us, that watches over our every act, that preserves our beings every instant. We have come from God, we are creatures of God. We are creatures of Love. We must love nothing terrestrial only in and for God. Is this easy? Indeed it is not. We are of the earth and we gravitate to it, and at times find it difficult to soar upwards. Indeed we could not do so but for the Grace of God. By His Grace we can, and **we will**, and our earthly instincts shall but keep our souls pure because we shall obtain humility from them. To the humble God giveth Grace for truly He resisteth the proud.

We might grow proud and think ourselves angelic because of our state, if we were not reminded by our natural instincts how quickly we can fall, and how easy it is to lose our spirituality. It is good for us occasionally to be made to see this, or, losing our taste for spiritual things, we should soon be looking back to the flesh-pots of Egypt. We know this, so let us be convinced of it now, and ponder on this thought, breathing a prayer to our Guardian Angel. Oh happy soul thus walking onward, looking upward, almost catching the beaming smile of Jesus' Face encouraging you to climb humbly on—on to Him. You who are basking in that smile which is the sunshine of your life, thank God for the Grace He has given you, but be wisely

fearful of losing it, for it can be easily lost. The sunshine of your life may burn into shadow; your appetite for spiritual things become jaded, and all may pall upon you. Yes, this may happen through your own fault through some neglect of Grace, some unconscious complacency in self. We notice it in others when it is quite unseen by themselves.

We remember one instance of a convert, full of Grace, spending hours in the chapel, for prayer was her delight, meeting a convert friend who was not anxious to be much in the chapel or fond of prayer. Our prayerful friend felt really uncharitable to her less fortunate neighbor and seemed really to have no faith in her. We tried to advise and point out reasons for not judging the new convert—her sincerity in making many sacrifices without sensible sweetness, but it was of no avail. Not many months afterwards conditions changed. The second convert in her new found treasure gradually developed an appetite for spirituality, while the first lost her fervor, and her spiritual life became a series of painful efforts. Thus God punished her for her rash judgments.

How good God is in His dealings with us! How can we ever thank Him for His care and solicitude for us? Let us show we are grateful by our acts, by our continual efforts, by ever striving to realize the high ideal God has set before us. Let us learn all we can of the perfection of our state. We must never think we know enough. What hidden heights of beauty there are to climb, and on each height perhaps a different virtue is waiting.

One may be mortified and yet not sufficiently full of love for others, not seeing God in those about them. Another may love acts of charity, and really neglect obedience to perform acts of charity. Others may be obedient but not practice it in a supernatural way. More may by self attachments have forgotten those words: *Hearken my daughter and incline thy ear, forget also thine own people and thy father's house. And the King shall desire Thy beauty for He is the Lord thy God.*

Ah, dear Sisters, when Jesus bound you to Himself, when the Blessed Sacrament was held above your head and you were bid to look upon your Lord—*Ecce panem Angelorum*—What did you promise? You inclined your ear to the voice of God. You forgot your people and your father's house, though you loved them with a better love from that moment. You remembered them no more but in God, and you loved the vast human race, the family of your Love and said to Him: "Thy people shall be my people." Happy moment, or rather a succession of happy moments for the happy Bride of this Divine Spouse, who as Jesus her Divine Love descends into her breast sinks into the Blessed Sacrament and loses herself in Jesus' hidden life on earth. Happy Soul, so much to be envied! God alone knows the power of His Grace in that soul, if found faithful. The Spouse of Jesus rises up in grandeur, in greatness, with power, with privileges, with rights to live in rehabilitated innocence, a fair flower of God in a

fallen world, an earthly angel with a glorious mission from high Heaven.

The Spouse of Jesus has ever to sing and make melody in her heart. She is to chant God's praises forever! She is to sing of the glories of God. She is to speak telling words of love, to bring peace on earth to men of good will. O happy soul! Go fulfill thy mission! Walk this earth leaning on the arm of Thy Beloved! Far happier art thou than the earthly bride as she walks with the one she has chosen for her partner in life! My Jesus, Thou hast chosen Thy Own to live Eternal Life. Sisters in Religion, of whatever order you may be, you are what you are, not alone for time, but for eternity. You have destined for you a place in Heaven for all eternity. The Spouse of Jesus of whatever Order she may be, is bound to believe and hope for the rich reward that is reserved for her if she is found faithful. Her reward will be in proportion to the fidelity with which she observed the Rules of her own Order.

Each Community fills the Garden of Jesus with beautiful beds of flowers, and every individual flower blossoming among its own species adds to the fragrance of the cluster in which it is found. Thus the Carmelite in much prayer and severe penance; the Sister of Charity in heroic deeds of mercy; the Little Sister of the Poor in the sweet humility with which she serves Christ's neglected ones; the Daughter of the Sacred Heart who instructs others to justice. The Sister of the Little Company of Mary, in her interior life of union with

Jesus and Mary, prayer, and personal assistance for the dying, are all spiritual flowers blossoming in the Garden of God. One is a rose of love; another a violet of humility; another a lily of dazzling purity, all growing in the same rich loam—The Sacred Heart of Jesus—yet each with its own beauty and fragrance. Contemplating this Garden of God we can readily imagine how the flowers would droop and wither if they were transplanted to a foreign soil. Each is beautiful amidst its own surroundings, and only retains its fragrance as long as it continues to grow in its own garden. The life of the flower is identical with the life of a religious. As long as she continues to be humble and obedient in the community that God has selected for her, so long will she continue to grow in sanctity and fervor. Outside of it she would wither away and die.

Whoever you are, whatever your state, to whatever religious Order you may belong, that you will be for all eternity. If this is a new thought to you do not put it by carelessly, or attach little importance to it as a theory that may be incorrect or fanciful.

I remember once noticing the startled expression of one not of the Catholic faith but of a sect which, nevertheless, believed in the Resurrection, when I remarked, in the course of a conversation on that point: "These identical hands of mine are to be one day in heaven, the very same hands that now hold this book." Almost unconsciously I then used Job's words: "They will be my own hands

and not another's." I was very much surprised at the startled look on my listener's face, especially when changed into a sad one, accompanied with the words: "Ah, all these things are mysterious." Evidently there was want of faith in her own creed, of which she was not aware.

It is sometimes the same with religious, when there is lack of faith in their own Community. Many think they can enter any convent and keep its Rule. They know they must lead a life of prayer and penance, and imagine, therefore, it does not much matter which Community is selected. Now it is not to be wondered at that many have this thought after spending years in religion, but when in the Novitiate they were taught what a difference there is in the different Orders, and the necessity of being perfect according to the Rule of our own Community. "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you," says Our Divine Lord, and consequently each of us should strive earnestly to work out our salvation in that particular part of God's garden the Master has selected for us. Be thou faithful unto death; and I will give thee the crown of life.

CHAPTER THREE

THE POWER OF FAITH

“If you have Faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this Mountain, Remove from hence hither, and it shall remove.” (Matt. XVII, 19.) Thanks be to God we have all Faith, but in our weakness we do not practice all that our Faith teaches. But what is the Faith that moves mountains? The Saints seem to have approached it, but we seem to be so far away from it. We have all Faith that God can move mountains if He wishes. We have not the slightest doubt on that point. We know well that God can do all things, for “with God all things are possible.” In what then are we wanting if we have unbounded faith in God.

Dear Sisters, I want you to bend all your attention to the fact that the reason so many of our religious acts have not the power and efficacy that they should, is because we have not sufficient Faith in God. We perform our religious acts with a certain amount of Faith, no doubt with a half-hearted hope, and a very weak Charity. We are even, at times, heard to say that some exercises do us no good. Why is it so? Not because God withholds His Grace. Nor from His want of will to give Grace to us. It can only be from an inward lack of a loving faith in Him. He will have mercy on us according to our trust in Him.

The same conditions hold with regard to our prayers. We sometimes go to prayer with the unexpressed undercurrent of feeling I am sure God will not hear me. This is not right. It does not incline the fountain of God's mercy to open and pour out its treasure upon us. Only those who go to the various exercises with strong faith and those who pray with happy confidence in God will receive the reward. "Be it done unto thee according to thy faith." Think not that this is a light thought to be dwelt upon now for a few minutes, and when you go away to be forgotten. If we were in great financial distress and were told where much treasure was locked away, subject to the command of the one who found the key, would it not be a pity if we could not locate it? It is just as great a pity that we have lost the key which would unlock God's treasures to us. That key is a loving hopeful Faith in God.

We go dryly through our exercises, finding that we do not advance, or derive much Grace from them. We allow a hazy thought to pervade our minds that it must be someone else's fault that our religious exercises have so little effect upon us. If we would only go with a firm Faith, with a loving belief that these exercises are of God's inspiration, we would receive much light from them, we would advance in Grace, and our minds would become stronger in Faith. If it be true that our prayers and exercises do us little good, then it is because of this want of trust in God, or our lack of Faith.

Let us learn that we are to do our part as well as God. How shall we alter our conduct? What is the next exercise we are going to? Suppose it is a spiritual conference. Let us beg the blessing God has in store for us upon this exercise which is one of the Institutions God has ordained in religious houses. Then we should have faith that God has reserved for us a Grace in this exercise, and proper participation in it will fill us with the glad Hope of partaking in that particular Grace.

It should be so with Chapter. We must hope that the particular Grace will be obtained if we enter with fitting dispositions. If it is a Chapter of Faults, we should certainly obtain an increase in humility; if it is a Chapter of Council, we must hope that God would give us light, after having invoked our Mother of Good Counsel.

We may have a certain amount of humility about us that may truthfully show us how little light we have, but on the other hand, we should not be cast down, but strengthen our faith in the thought that God has blessed this Religious Function and instituted it in religious houses. He will likewise assist and give us the light that our unaided intellects can never attain. We may dread a Visitation, but we should not. On the contrary, if we had Faith and Hope that God's Grace would visit us, according to our Faith, it would be done to us.

Oh! how we should thirst for God's Grace! With what zeal should we preserve it, and how we should be not only bedewed, but deluged with it.

if we possessed the key that would open the Door of Divine Grace—a firm hopeful and loving Faith. Oh, let us beg it from God. Let us be assured how great need we have of Faith and exercise ourselves in it. Let us perform act upon act that we may obtain it, and offer again and again the firm hopeful and loving faith of Mary, Our Blessed Mother, in behalf of our own weak imitation.

Let us examine ourselves. Are we conscious how much we need this hopeful Faith? We know how much we need it, for we do not run to exercises that we are now convinced would bring us much Grace. In the past we have almost sought to avoid some exercises, or we have been careless about them or have gone through them by routine.

What shall we do in the present? What shall we do in the future? We will hunger and thirst after Grace, we will cherish a great hope that God will impart much of it to us, if we seek it by the means He has appointed. We will reverence all the exercises and ordinances of our holy state. Be not deceived, dear Sisters, they will bring us closer to God and God closer to us. They will bring us Grace that we will love and then we will not be so doubting and hesitating. We are children of Faith, Hope and Love. We will not walk this earth as children led by one without will or power to help us, but we will work out our salvation sheltered by God's protecting power, so hopeful, so glad, so grateful that in eternity we shall have the Special glory of those who, in time, worshiped their God more trustingly and more lovingly.

We must not then lose our time or the merit of our actions by our want of Confidence in God. We will look upon our days in a different light hereafter. As we wish to add to the praise we have given to Our Lady, and as we desire our lives to glorify God for time, and for eternity, we will hoard up our spiritual wealth, fearful of losing any of Our Lady's treasures, and by this method, which by practice will become easy, we shall soon become rich in Grace.

We do not need to accomplish more exterior acts, but rather to put into them more pious dispositions than they have hitherto had. Then we will act, we will suffer, we will pray with a greater Faith, Hope and Love.

In the various works of Charity in which we are engaged, we have already a certain hope, that, if we do our part, God will bless them and make them productive of much good. Strive to accomplish these works with absolute Faith that they are God's will, and that therefore there is a great grace attached to them. Be not doubtful! God is with you in your exercises, and if you trust Him, and lean upon Him, He will not withdraw and let you fall but He will sustain and strengthen you.

God knows your weakness better than you know it yourself, but have confidence in His Goodness, and a ray of light from His mind will illuminate yours, or He will make His Will known to you through some human means in a marked manner.

Wherein is it, dear Sisters, that you have most doubted God? Is it in temporal or spiritual mat-

ters, or both? Endeavor from this to change your life and nurture a happy trust and confidence that God will surely answer your prayers; that He will make known His will to you, for no one has ever applied to Him in vain. Know you not that we wrong our God by the slightest suspicion of doubt?

If we still persist in going about our religious exercises, sadly and despondently, or carelessly and indifferently, with only half a hope that we shall derive any profit from them, with a doubting faith that God will give us Grace from them, we cannot expect that He will contradict what He has said and give us in the same bountiful manner as He gives to those who fully rely upon Him. Ah no! What has been our custom in the past shall not continue in the future. We have to perform certain duties, we are vowed to them. Then we will accomplish them with strong Faith, firm Hope and ardent Charity.

God will have mercy according to our trust in Him. Let this thought be engraven upon our minds and hearts, and then all our exercises will take on a different attitude. There will be a different relish; a greater contentment in performing them; there will be less trouble, and better far than all, we shall be laying up treasures for Eternity. Ah me! We know that too much confidence in one's self is a thing to be abhorred, and those who direct in God's work should not be too assured that what they are saying and doing is right. We have a feeling of repugnance to those who boast of their own talents and feel strongly assured of their own judgment, but we must be careful not to fall into the

other extreme of too little confidence in ourselves. When we have not faith in our own powers we have not sufficient faith and trust in God. What an unhappy state are they in, who, knowing their own weakness, at the same time, are wanting in the Faith and Hope they should have in the promises and power of God.

Sad indeed would be our condition if we had promised God certain things, relying on our own powers, and ignoring God's Grace. Sad, indeed, would it be for us if we were placed in a certain position in God's vineyard for which we knew we were unfit, and yet had no hope that God would help us. Oh, if we had that Faith in God what great things would we not be able to do for Him! Ah, if we had less confidence in ourselves, and more trust in God, then should we be able to work with an Apostolic Zeal, then should we value the time in which we could work with great deeds for God's glory.

Because we have not striven to obtain this wonderful insight to God's Grace in all the circumstances of our spiritual Life we are poor when we might have been rich; our works are fruitless for want of Faith in our good God's desire to help us.

Let us turn to the Mother of our Holy Faith; the Virgin proclaimed Blessed because she believed. We know our Faith is weak, but let us use the Faith of the Mother most Faithful. Let us ask her to offer for us her heart of Faith. In all the acts in which we know we have been so wanting hitherto, let us offer to Jesus His Mother's virtues to supply

for us. The Faith and Hope of the Mother of Jesus will be in her children if they humbly ask her to supply for their deficiencies. We will ask our holy Mother to strengthen our Faith now, today and tomorrow, this month and next month. We will, likewise, ask Jesus to regard not us, but to see His Mother in us, and for her dear sake to supply our deficiencies, and bless us and our works. May these thoughts be seeds well sown so that they will bring forth fruit a hundredfold!

Remember, dear Sisters, you are not powerless, but most powerful, if you work with Faith. So we will work, and living by Faith and Hope, we will die, please God—Victims of Love, hoping for the heaven promised to those who are faithful to the end. Ah, with what fresh vigour, please God, we will go to our next work, whatever it may be! We may have to attend an obstinate sinner, or to decide an important matter, but will go filled with Faith in our work, Charity towards the one we assist, and Hope in the good God for whom we labor.

CHAPTER FOUR

TRUST IN GOD

Dear Sisters, have we sought God? Some great danger threatens us, heavy trials have gathered round us, there seems to be no escape from our difficulties, but God knows the way. He will deliver us from these afflictions; He will lead us out of danger if we will but trust in Him. We shall feel His Hand in the darkness if we confide in Him. Oh, let us clasp His Hand now in Faith, Hope and Love. Whom are we fearing? For what are we troubling? The storms may arise; human nature may shrink; but the words spoken by the Incarnate Word must ring forever in our ears. Why are ye fearful, Oh ye of little Faith?

Let us ask ourselves now whether we are in darkness or in light upon the Good Providence of Our God by an act of unreserved confidence. Let it be a firm irrevocable act, and sweet indeed will life become to us. We shall love the time given to us in which we can perform such great works, such glorious deeds for God. In time we can do one thing that we cannot do in eternity, namely, believe and hope and trust in our God, for in the life to come Faith is transformed into knowledge, hope into realization and charity into love. We are mak-

ing the act now, not a sentimental one, but a real substantial act by which we give ourselves unreservedly into the hands of Divine Providence, through the hands of our Lady, our Mother of Holy Hope. How shall we prove that it is not a sentimental act; how make it a practical act? In times when we are inclined to be troubled, to be over-anxious, we will think of the compact we have made and remember that by it we have cast ourselves unreservedly, once for all, into the Arms of Divine Providence, and if we doubt, we should be breaking this compact. We would be struggling from the embrace of the Divine arms. We must make a fresh act of Faith and Hope. We must nestle closer to this home, the bosom of God's Providence, offering again and again the heroic Hope of God's Saints, of the Holy Martyrs, and above all of the Queen of Saints and of Martyrs, our own Mother Mary will supply for our weak Hope, and whilst we are thus praying our anxiety will be lightened, peace will be restored to our troubled souls and God will be glorified. Yes, the Almighty God will be glorified by the trust and confidence of His weak little creature. The weak child of earth rests on the All Powerful with unbounded confidence, with peace unknown to so many of God's creatures. The hopeful loving child of earth has indeed found a home on earth, or shall we call it a life-boat on the stormy sea of time, where she can be assured of safety, guided by the strong arm of the great Pilot. Oh! How God loves that child of earth whose Hope corresponds to her Faith.

It has such a different attitude from those who possess Faith, but not hopeful Faith; their attitude to their God, their Beneficent Creator is so different from His children who run to Him with the childlike simple love of the children of Hope. They seem afraid of their God as we are of one who is pitiless and unmerciful; they act as though He were a tyrant and not a tender loving Father. They have Faith but if it could be expressed in words their creed would be I believe God could do so and so for me. I know He can. I have Faith in Him, *but I do not believe He will.* According to their hope it shall be done to them.

I will have mercy on them according to their trust in Me. Well it is for us that the good God does not always thus measure His Benefits, but when He has given again and again unexpected favours, how often we forget to thank Him; forget to acknowledge them. Thus it has been with us, O God in the past, but with Thy Help it shall not be so in the future! We wish to commence a new life—a brave beautiful life! We are buoyed up now with a new Hope that we had not hitherto possessed. As we consider now that Hope is good for us, we are also reminded that it is glorious to God. Hope casts a radiance about us. Others will wonder and might ask, Whence is this joy which seems to permeate you? We might truthfully answer, “We have found the Key to a great Treasure. Immense riches and rare graces.”

What are we saying? We possess indeed all that the human heart can desire. Surely there is no

limit to what the Creator will give if there is no limit to the trust of the creature. Henceforth then, our Mother shall decorate Her little flock with a badge of Holy Hope when this special mark shall be upon them, the radiance of God's countenance will shine round them and brighten their lives so that they seem creatures of another world. We have met some of these souls and they seemed creatures of a higher life. Attached rather to Heaven than to earth, their strength of soul was great because they were nurtured from on high. They needed no earthly support; they leaned upon their God.

Creatures fail, but God never fails. Those who lean upon Him have indeed an unbending support. They cannot fall, because He will not permit them to do so for never was it known that the All Holy God of all Perfection—the faithful one—the Governor and supporter of all things—ever betrayed the trust the creature placed in Him. When we have placed ourselves in the arms of Divine Providence by this act of oblation and having cast ourselves on this Infinite ocean of Love, we will resolve not to mar its beauty for we have done so knowing Our God has care of us. Having sown the seeds, as it were, by this solemn dedication and consecration of ourselves, we have now to watch the little plant that may appear so that it may bring forth flowers and fruit. It is a beautiful stroke of the chisel towards the perfection of that work we are daily fashioning to the likeness of Our Grand Model. It will form a new spirituality within us,

not the act itself, but the living up to it in the corresponding actions which follow.

Its beauty will not be shown in smooth peaceful times when it is comparatively easy to hope and trust in God, but when the days are dark, when clouds obscure the bright light of the Sun of Justice, then it is we shall honor Our God by trust in Him.

Yes—Though He slay me still will I trust in Him—must be the cry of the soul that has anchored itself firmly to Divine Hope. Ah, what need of this Divine Hope have we not, in these days, when the Tempest-tossed Church, with its banners boldly unfurled, is tossed on the rude waves of a sea of indifference and unbelief. Even the crew of the good ship need to trust in Divine Power for they see how truly vain is the help of man. Ah, they are a brave crew and grow braver in these times of trial. The world is fearful, distrustful, one dreads another, but Christians gather round the Sacred Heart and bind themselves more closely together by means of confraternities and communities. God's spirit is renewed within them and they are happy in the hour of trial, confident that God **can** and **will** help them.

If, indeed, the Church is tried, so are the works of the Church, such as Religious Communities, Foundations and individual members. All are tried in some way, but all are safe if they trust their God. Perhaps there are some suffering at this moment from one of the worst human woes—Fear? Ah! Look up poor suffering one. See Jesus coming to you. His words are seemingly a reproach, but His

look is kind. Why dost thou doubt, O thou of little Faith. The tones are tender and gentle hands are stretched out to lift you from the depths of despair. Let Jesus lift you up then. Trust Him and throw yourself upon Him.

Here let us pause, and ponder, making our resolutions. Jesus has hold of me. I am united to Him. He will act in me if I hope and trust in Him. I must remind myself of this many times a day, in the different occurrences of the day, in the various events of my Religious Life. I must renew the union of my soul with Jesus. Thus I shall derive grace from every exercise, for by faith I know the various exercises in Religion are meant to strengthen the soul, to help it to keep in this union with God, which is such a Glory to Him, and such an honor and happiness to the little creature.

It is a responsibility, yes, and a great risk, for to keep in the lofty heights of the spiritual life is not easy. Foolish they are who, when first entering and tasting the freshness and sweetness of the Spiritual life, and reading what the Saints have written of the loveliness of the mystical union of the soul with God, and who having been drawn by our dear Lord's call to give up all things to follow Him, think that this sweetness is always going to continue and that there are to be no more bitter things in their life. They may have always the joy of contentment, but only if they fight the good fight. There must come things that seem hard and it would be unwise not to prepare for them.

Witness His first disciples who because they thought His sayings concerning His flesh and blood hard and difficult, walked no more with Him, though they had followed Him for a long time. Ah no! As we climb the dizzy heights, a prudent dread of ourselves and our own weakness should not be wanting to us. Look at the saintly Father Faber, a man who seems to have made himself so one with God that he speaks of the heights of sanctity with bated breath and tells us how the thin pure air of holiness is an atmosphere in which human beings can scarcely exist. Here will Hope come to our Aid and our Hope being holy will also be humble. We will repeat again and again, I can do all things. Yes—in Him who strengthens me. It is for want of this trust in God that there are so many wrecks in the spiritual life, so many failures. Our youthful minds, pliant and fervent, are moulded to love virtue and to hate vice. We mean to be good, very good, and we do not comprehend being daunted. We are full of courage and confidence, but what confidence? Is it not more confidence in self than in God? We hasten on with the vigour of youth, perhaps more natural vigor than supernatural grace, but at last we come to a halt. We have arrived at that point where our natural strength and courage could not take us farther. Now it seems perfectly hopeless to strive after the higher things we had once intended. Now nature cannot go on! It is perfectly true that the help of man is vain in many a crisis of our lives. We have been so accustomed to rely upon ourselves and others that it is not

easy now to lean our whole strength upon God. We are fearsome, and having no courage we decline more to earthly things; a habit that grows with age. When the romance of youth is over, and we do not still aim at high things in the Spiritual life as we formerly did, we begin to think it is not necessary—that we can save our souls without any special help, and so we become of the earth—earthly. We become lukewarm and we lose that content we once had and the beauty of life fades from us. Ah! If any of us are now near this state let us rise up out of ourselves, let us cry with the greatest humility to our God to send us help. We are nothing! We said this once, and now we know it, and our very truthfulness will incline God towards us. Our hope in Him will touch His Heart, and having thrown ourselves wholly and entirely upon His Divine Providence, trusting in His Omnipotence, our first vigor will be renewed and we shall know Our God better and love Him more than we ever did before.

Thus the great work of perfection will go on and we shall scarcely know ourselves. The working of God's spirit within us will bring such light. The old things will pass away. We are now indeed as giants, for we are upheld by Divine Power. Ah My God grant this. Grant that our act of consecration to Thy Divine Providence may be no simple act. In the next trial that may come across our lives instead of relying upon self, as we have hitherto so often done, we will turn quickly to our God and ask His help to extricate us from the difficulties

which His Providence has permitted to prove our fidelity and strengthen our trust and Hope in Him. We will thus be true to God and faithful to our promises, and the Benediction of the Most High will rest over us during these fleeting moments of time, and God will look upon us with ineffable complacency in this life and He will fold us in the arms of His Divine Providence and His everlasting love in Eternity.

CHAPTER FIVE

BLESSED OBEDIENCE

It is easy, Dear Sisters, to miss the beauty of religious life, for its whole beauty is founded on order. If we disarrange this order we spoil lives devoted to God, that would be most beautiful in His Light if they are lived according to the spirit and letter of the Rule. Ah, we are foolish indeed to be like Martha "troubled about many things," instead of sitting like Mary peacefully at Jesus' feet. In Religious life one of the most dangerous stumbling blocks is want of charity for others.

There are some Religious who are most respectful, dutiful and kind when someone they personally love is in office, but who fail signally, and show their want of religious spirit when their loved one is removed, or a stranger is appointed as Superior. Dear Sisters, Children of my heart, I would write it with blood if it would make a deeper impression, you owe filial love and obedience to any member of the Community given the responsibility of Superior. Her appointment is God's Holy Will, made for your salvation and the perfection of the work in which God delights. You must respect that high office. Love the person in position as much

as you can, it is well; but if your natures do not assimilate and you cannot have a sensible love, you must, at least, always obey. To love the person who commands is a help for it makes obedience easy, but it is a hindrance also, if with the natural we do not unite the supernatural motive. We shall be bright lights burning in the darkness of the world, if this holy discipline, this true religious spirit is observed.

The spirit of all Evil will indeed strive to hinder this perfect obedience by rousing a spirit of disrespect, of discontent, of criticism, thereby marring the beauty of God's work. A command may sometimes be given which may not be the most perfect, but it would be a still greater imperfection in the one to whom it is given if she murmurs, criticises, or is discontented. She is spreading a blot on God's work by her irreligious spirit. The Superior may have been wanting in judgment, but there is nothing wrong in that as none of us always do the perfect thing. The wrong is in the great imperfection and probably sin shown by the unreligious spirit of the Sister who would criticise the Superior placed over her. How easy it is to become uncharitable or contentious! Oh! So easy! Unguarded expressions sometimes show us that a Sister is on the point of tepidity in the spiritual life.

As I contemplate the Sisters with a cheerful spirit, at the Voice of Obedience going here and there to their various works, the words come to my mind, She is sent! Suppose a shadow clouds her

countenance when an order is given, perhaps even a murmur muttered, how the picture would be marred!

The Sister who has been ungenerous, selfish—is she happier? Was anyone ever happier when they had been selfish or ungenerous? Selfishness, or want of generosity, are bad enough, but there are worse evils—murmuring and discontent. Immersed in them we are in direct opposition to our state of obedience, consequently we are in direct opposition to God.

My God, my God, I look up yearningly to Thee. I love only Thee. Thou art my All in All! We have cried this prayer, Dear Sisters, to our God! We meant it then, repeat and reiterate it now, though in an evil hour we might have forgotten. May God pity us for indeed we are sorry. We will not again mar and blot God's work. Hereafter we will not do the work of the evil one, but we will labor all for God. We will be true religious in God's house, zealously doing all in our power for His honor and Glory, not complaining, but mourning and grieving as a Spouse of Jesus should at what we find is not in accord with God's Holy Will.

There is not a place in the world where there is no evil. Our Lord's own words tell us that it is impossible that scandals should not be, though at the same time He says—"Woe to the world because of scandals! For it must needs be that scandals come: but nevertheless woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh." (Mat. 18-7.) We must likewise remember that there are times when some are scandalized with-

out a just cause. But why are we bringing these points forward? It is to remind all religious of their duty in God's House, Obedience, blind and simple obedience is their portion. They are not to regard the person who commands or question the commands given. Even the most humble subject, however, should be able to understand that, if at any time Superiors should contradict one another, the vow of Obedience binds them to the higher Superior. This does not often occur, thank God, for Superiors are as a rule most anxious to carry out all the wishes of their higher Superior. It is the duty of every Religious to help and support whoever may be placed in Office, with every mark of respect and love. Put yourself in the Superior's place. You might have the very best will in the world to do your duty to those in your charge, but how would you feel if those Sisters, placed with you, watched your movements in order to criticise you, and, if instead of excusing any faults of inexperience or those that might arise from the strangeness of the new position, seemed more inclined to expose them merely through a lack of charity? A true religious spirit cultivates respect for those in Office, and, indeed, this virtue is one of the most pleasing to God.

Zeal for God's house should induce us to incite all around us to this respect of Office. Even in worldly Institutions it would only be in a disorderly and irregulated place where respect is not observed for the officers. My Sisters, I beg you to show respect for your Superiors. You have not

to criticise their actions; you have simply to obey. Stop the discontent and murmuring instantly; crush the temptation at the beginning; after-remedies may come too late. Look back now and do not hide from yourselves when you have been wrong. We may even have influenced others who have been affected by this sad plague of insubordination hateful everywhere, but much more detestable in a religious house.

But we will not look only at one side. Let us turn now to the other. How happy we are when in simplicity we are cheerfully and generously obeying for love of Jesus and in imitation of Him. Let us look back at our Novitiate instructions. We were warned there that, if we were told to do something even if we knew a better way, we should obey the command given. We should imitate Our Lord, who must have known what to do so much better than St. Joseph, and yet we cannot doubt that He listened humbly to the directions given Him. In our Novitiate days we performed our acts of obedience unquestioningly. How many acts of obedience do we thus perform now? Ah, how easy it is to miss the beauty of religious life, not from a bad will, but from sheer negligence! God will hold all accountable for want of putting into practice what they have been taught. Let us begin again. This very month let us offer a bouquet of spiritual flowers to Our Sweet Mother. Let it be composed of acts of blind obedience, bound round with true humility. Blind obedience perfects us in our holy state, especially if we are prompted by the love of

Jesus—who was obedient unto death even unto the death of the Cross. Christ's oblation was not easy sweet obedience, but rather blind obedience, for it was the will of His Heavenly Father that He should suffer shame and contempt even unto the end. When He was reviled, He reviled not. He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers He was dumb. These are not words to merely be heard, but to be taken to heart so that when we go away, we may put them into practice. Those who are obedient to death, even the death of the Cross, will receive the crown of life when they meet Jesus, their Spouse, in an Eternal Embrace. Obedience is the very essence of religious life. A religious is one bound. To be obedient we must be mortified. Without obedience we are failures in God's sight. We repeat these things over and over again, Dear Sisters, but we know how much our lives are subject to changes, variety of occupations and work occupies our time and makes us forget many things that we have been told over and over again.

It has been said that some Sisters have an easier Novitiate than others and therefore their minds are freer to remember the lectures they received. Others, more tried, found it more difficult to understand and absorb the points of the lectures. Their interior trials and struggles hindered them. Their minds were more bent upon themselves, and if questioned they would be found not to have fully understood what had been said. Others forget eas-

ily, so we must, for many reasons, repeat the same things again and again.

Every Professed Sister is a Mother before God, whether she has the title or not. She has to be the fruitful Spouse of Jesus, and she must bring His Spirit to bear upon the souls around her. The Holy Ghost makes use of her in order that Jesus might grow in the souls of many creatures. The Sister must not keep her talents hid in a napkin. Jesus gives her graces to use for others, and the punishment is severe on the sterile spouse of Jesus. Yes, there is even punishment for what she does not do that she might have done. Let us then be on the lookout to accomplish our Mother's work.

Every soul we come in contact with we must influence for good. We can hardly forget the sinner that must be brought to repentance, yet there are the good we must strive to make better, and in whom we must increase the longing to be perfect. Such labor is our duty, not a work of supererogation, and by the fulfilment of it we shall save our immortal souls. In the world we, perhaps, did many acts of charity. We may have prompted others to join confraternities or we may have striven in other ways to lead souls to God. These were works of supererogation. We were not obliged to do them. They were not our manifest duty. Not so with us now. Having been called to a special service by a good and great Master, Our Dear Lord Himself, it is our bounden duty to build up the Kingdom of God in the minds and hearts of those among whom we labor.

Ah! look back and see the many duties you have left undone. Sometimes it appears that Sisters try to slip through their religious life with as little discomfort to themselves as possible. They do not want to trouble themselves. It may be that they are not conscious of this failing. If they knew how very selfish they were, they would surely battle strongly against it, as they are seemingly unaware of their unenviable condition, they go on from year to year, neglecting part of their service to the good God. These Sisters take advantage of their position for they use the privileges of the spiritual life for themselves alone. They forget that their talents, their graces were given to them for the good of others besides themselves.

What should we think of one who having been given money for the poor spent it on herself? This is exactly what they do, who, living in a community, founded to save souls, are not unselfish and zealous in their work, but use their graces only for their own good. Sisters of such a type may save their own souls but they will not help others to do so. They grow into selfish beings, and are no more like a generous, devoted Spouse of Jesus than a Pharisee was like an Apostle. Exteriorly they may not be disedifying; they may love to be punctual; they may do their duties carefully, just as many worldly people acquit themselves of their social duties, but the burning zeal for souls, the heroic self-forgetfulness, the extreme generosity and the Christ-like self-oblation are wanting in them. My Sisters! I beg you not to relax! Spur yourselves on! Be

not deceived by any specious reasoning such as: "I must take care of my health for the Community's sake, must be prudent for Religion's sake, yes, but be careful to be at all times zealous." Happy for us if we injure our health under obedience or even shorten our lives through zeal for God. Indeed we might lawfully pray to God to grant us the great gift of self-oblation. "I wish no higher death than one through obedience and zeal, if Our Dear Lord would grant it to one so unworthy how privileged should I feel." Sweet Jesus! Inspire Thy children that they imbibe Thy Spirit, Thy desires, Thy wishes, all the holy emanations of Thy Sacred Heart! Living, may they live for Thee! Dying, may they die for Thee!

Dear Sisters, we can have no surer sign that we are living by the sweet spirit of Jesus and Mary, and being a delight to the Eternal Father, than that we are zealous and obedient.

I am wandering from my subject, namely obedience, in the desire I have to urge you to greater zeal for souls, for our poor dying, and greater love for the vast family committed to our care, and I beg you to be more zealous in engaging others to unite with us in assisting our many works. But perhaps I am not really digressing for in being more devoted, and more untiring in your efforts, you are being more perfectly obedient; and this obedience will make you a perfect religious, which is what your Mothers on earth desire and which is still more desired by your Holy Mother in heaven. How that Dear Holy

Heart of Mary desires to see her daughters perfected in the state in which she has placed them!

Sisters now and then write from a distance asking a general permission to undertake some work. Perhaps it takes too long to get individual permissions. All well and good, but we do not recommend this, for how much better, even if there is some delay, to obtain the blessing of obedience on each particular request. You may understand the work better than your Superior, and know she cannot advise you how to do it. No! but she can give you a greater help than the most clever advice, namely, the blessing of obedience, with its miraculous power. Dear Sisters, impress this thought well upon your minds, that no one can give you this blessing but your Mother—the one who is your Head. The members of each house receive the blessing of obedience from the head of that house, and the various Superiors obtain the blessing of obedience from the Mother of the Head House—the Mother-House as it is called because it is the Mother of all the others. It is from the Mother-House that the Foundations are to draw their life and strength. The other houses like dutiful children must turn to it for obedience, council and encouragement; and those who are wise will never wish to escape from this happy holy union with their head. The branch that ceases to be nurtured by the sap of the Mother-tree will be lopped off and presently will wither away. May God avert such an evil from us! May our Sisters ever be unselfishly seeking God and His Will alone, for it is

self-seeking that ever causes disunion. May God's Holy Spirit be poured upon His Spouses uniting them with Its beautiful Spirit of Love for one another. It was Jesus' own command that He gave us from the very depth of His Dear Sacred Heart. We will dwell on these words, my dear Sisters, and in our thoughts and acts we will breathe out our love! We will tinge all we do with this golden hue—this reflection of heaven!

The light of the sun brightens everything it falls upon, just as the light of God's love falling upon us will brighten our days and enable us to live lives of purest love.

We commenced by speaking of Obedience and we see how it brings love, and all other virtues in its train. Thus we must be convinced that the beauty of our lives as religious consist in our perfect obedience, and then we shall abound in Charity and in all virtues that will endear us to our dear Lord. Obedience makes us practice a number of virtues, and we need to practice them if we are to be fruitful to our Spouse. All around us we see reasons why we should strive to bear fruit. No one cares to behold a tree without flowering branches or ripening fruits. Why, then, allow our souls to wither and dry up? It is sometimes said, "How can I help it? My good desires seem dead. The virtues I once possessed are now so difficult to practice." Another says, "I was not born good, how can I practice virtues like one naturally good." Dear Sisters, I can but say one thing, and to deeply impress it upon your hearts, I would it were possible to

write with my heart's blood these words—Live by Jesus! Jesus My Life! This is the cry of the wise soul; the cry of the soul taught by God. We might say God inspires her. The Holy Spirit encompasses the soul that knows itself to be but sterile earth and dry rock, without the life Jesus gives to it. The Body and Blood of Jesus is our strength, our very life. We can receive only once in the day this life-giving sacrament, but hourly, and many times an hour, we can and we should take our spiritual life from our Dear Lord. We want fervour, we want zeal—we have to draw from our Dear Lord. We want the spirit of prayer, we want recollection, we want to live in the presence of God—we must fly to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus and press ourselves close to Him. We must clothe our nakedness with the beauty of that sacred Humanity; and all holiness will grow in us. The Blood of Jesus penetrates us, His virtues take root in our souls almost unconsciously, but also some times consciously a change takes place, and we feeling the transformation can at times cry out, "I live now not I but Christ liveth in Me." Gradually this becomes our habitual state, and our dear Lord looks with love upon the precious fruit of His passion and death. His greater content is so unutterably delightful that we have no words in our human language to express the bliss of the Sacred Heart in a soul thus walking in His Steps. Would that there were more walking in this way of perfection. Holy Spirit descend, cast fire upon this earth. Enkindle a longing desire in the souls of many to ascend those

heights of perfection. We tremble as we gaze upon them. We could not ascend alone. We must have a guide to show us. Who is that mountain guide, or rather what is it? It is obedience!

We cannot look at those mountain tops? We shut our eyes! We deliver ourselves to our guide, Holy Obedience, and we are safe. We go on step by step and the way is easier than we thought, and we go on often breathless and weary. We still have our eyes closed. When we open them we are dizzy. It is better not to look at the City below from whence we came, and we must wait the moment God has appointed to show us what He has done for us. Ah Yes! Let us go on by the safe and sure guide. Dear Sisters, we have travelled on and on, and we have felt the presence of Our God though we have not seen Him. How good God has been to us. We sometimes look back over the way we came to Religious life, and the days we have spent therein, and we can but say: Not unto us, not unto us, O God, but to Thee be all glory. There are parts of that way we have not walked by Thou hast carried us. Jesus is now with us, or we should not be here in His Holy House. We could not have been faithful but by His Grace, and having come so far will He leave us? Never. We might leave Him but the sweet sign that we are in His grace and favour is—that we love obedience, that we respect those over us and know that we are doing God's Holy Will when we are simply obeying; and obeying for love of Jesus. Remembering ever when we are obeying our written and living Rule that we are do-

ing what the Angels are doing in Heaven—God's Holy Will, and we can do no more than strive to do on earth what the Blessed are doing in Heaven. My God give light to Thy Children. Let them again renew those Blessed Vows, their passport to Heaven, and vow and promise in the sight of God's angels, saints and the whole Court of Heaven to be obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Looking into the Heart of Jesus whom do we find deep in its recesses imbibing its spirit? The Obedient Soul, the soul that has no other desire but to live to keep the vows which are indeed the blessed nails binding her to her God on earth and forming her crown for ever in heaven.

PART TWO
THE SPOUSE OF JESUS CRUCIFIED

CHAPTER ONE

A BRIDE OF SORROW

And thy own soul a sword shall pierce! Sweet Mother, how often we read the words of this prophecy of holy Simeon! We frequently think of them, and believe we think rightly and lovingly, yet the day comes when these words have a new meaning. We understood them not until now, or we applied them only to Thee, Sweet Mother. True, they are meant only for Thee, Mother of our crucified Saviour, but now Thou dost say them to us, to each of thy chosen children: *And thy own soul a sword shall pierce!*

My dear Sisters, wherever you may be, hear these words, repeat them again and apply them to yourself: "And thy own soul a sword shall pierce."

Oh, my dear Sisters, be brave! Our Lady helps her children and keeps them pure and holy as they go about doing good in the world. Live then purely that the Mother of God may hereafter gaze upon you as one of the crucified virgins who followed in the footsteps of the Eternal Lamb of God. Yes, this is our Holy Mother's desire, but she has even a greater one in store for you. Holy Simeon's prophecy, so literally fulfilled in her, must be duplicated in her children. Their souls must be pierced with the sword of sorrow. She is the Queen of Martyrs and she must have her own little martyrs band. Mary our mother has led the way and we must follow in her footsteps. Remember too, my dear

Sisters, that it is not the amount of suffering you have to bear that will make you Mary's martyrs, but it is the manner in which you suffer. There must be no repining, no complaining. With the humility and patience of Christ, you must seek to carry your cross as did He. You may fall again and again beneath its burden as did He but you will not merit the crown of Eternal life until you are crucified with Him on Calvary's heights.

All about us we see much suffering. Suffering is the chastisement of God that works good in its own way. Suffering saves many souls for it keeps them from becoming attached to the world. Our suffering, however, cannot be compared to the martyrdom of our holy mother. It is nothing in comparison to hers. Rather is it more like that of Dismas, who was crucified on the right of Jesus, and who was saved by Him because of his humble prayers.

When Christ hung dying upon the cross the good thief spoke to Him, speaking for himself and the one who hung upon the left of Christ, "We receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done no evil." And he said to Jesus: "Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom." The humility of Dismas was well rewarded and his sufferings were sanctified by the consoling words of Christ: "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." How much better, however, had his prayer nothing of self in it? Only the unselfish souls pierced with true sorrow caused by a genuine love of God are

most worthy of our crucified Saviour. God grant that we all may be among such blessed souls! Let us begin by being brave and unselfish with our lesser trials, so that God may give us the grace to bear the greater ones, when his love permits or sends them. May we suffer with the spirit of the holy martyrs, never pitying ourselves, but content to learn what God's good Providence has ordained, sweetly patient, gentle and considerate to all, and especially when the sword is deepest in our own hearts.

Only by suffering in this manner shall we be worthy children of Mary's sword-pierced Heart. Only by suffering in this manner shall we comfort it. Without this filial sorrow for a mother's suffering our souls will not be in union with Mary's, and if it be true that the disciple is not above his Master, but must suffer and be despised with Him, so must Mary's children resemble in some degree their holy Mother. Let us then, daughters of a suffering Mother, see who can be the most sympathetic with Mary's sufferings. Standing beneath the cross of Calvary, behold thy mother! take her to your arms as did St. John and offer her your heart and soul to suffer with her, and beg that broken-hearted mother whose soul was pierced with seven swords of sorrow to strengthen your weak heart to suffer with her. Then, when your suffering has been turned into joy you will not only be ranked amongst the band of virgins who followed in the footsteps of the Lamb, wheresoever he goeth, but you will be likewise numbered amongst the holy women who

stood at the cross her station keeping with a mournful Mother weeping. Yes, there are some of Mary's children who will rank with the holy martyrs, because they have given their lives spiritually while still living physically, in a manner known only to the elect. Surely the children who imitate their mother, Queen of Martyrs, in this life, will share her joy in the life to come. Let us often then, and especially in times of sorrow, repeat to ourselves these sad but holy words: "And thy own soul a sword shall pierce." Keep close, my dear Sisters, to the holy Mother who is drawing you to herself with so much love. You are the images of Jesus to her and, therefore she yearns for your likeness to Him.

The confidence of Mary was not destroyed by the crucifixion of Christ. She believed in Him, she loved Him. Build up your confidence on the confidence of our holy Mother. How often your confidence is tried by seeming failure, by tribulations that appear as hindrances to your perfection. They are not hindrances, but they are helps given to try your faith and love. They are permitted in order to increase your love of God and to make you love Him more and more. At times He may have seemed to have done less for you than for others. Perhaps you think yourself a failure in God's work, or you may have even fallen into sin. God may have permitted this for some special reason, and if the sharp sword of sorrow piercing your soul makes you cry with anguish: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yet you must not despair, but with a

shadow of Mary's confidence, try to love and serve Him more in the future. It should be your aim to purify your love like that of Mary of Magdala, who loved Christ so much for His own sake, she who had nothing to love in herself.

Divine grace revealed to Magdalen how unfaithful she had been to God. In her great love for Him, however, the thought of herself was utterly blotted out, and even her own sinfulness was turned into sanctity by the strength and holiness of the Man-God before Whose feet she prayed for pardon. Christ Himself summed up Magdalen's perfections in those beautiful words, Because she hath loved much, much also is forgiven her. We all love God, and yet not as Magdalen. And why? Because we love God and ourselves also, and we try to please ourselves in our love more than we try to please God. This is not pure love of God. "Jesus meek and humble of heart make my heart like unto Thine!" Let us try to love Christ with the love of Mary Magdalen, that is for His own sake, because He is so lovable, because He is our Lord and our God. If Christ is our only love and we put all our trust in Him, all things else may fail us but Christ never. If our confidence in Christ is not unbounded we do not love Him as we should. We may be aiming at perfect recollection, more resigned patience, or utter poverty, but only a greater love of Jesus will bring us more perfection in these virtues. Our attempts at higher perfection will cause us suffering, for love cannot exist without suffering. Only the love of Jesus can

place us above human respect or allow us to bear with humiliation. Behold the proud woman of Magdala, unmindful of the sneers on the lips of those about her, not heeding the scornful words that fell upon her ears, oblivious of the looks that cut her deeper than blows, casting herself humbly at the feet of Jesus. Magdalen would have been ashamed to have been seen thus at another time, but now forgetful of self she glories in her degradation, inspired by her great love for Jesus. It can be so with us in our humiliations. What we now think small or degrading, will be transfigured through love of Jesus. So it may be with our soul. It may be subconsciously aware of its wretchedness, yet if it does not brood upon its fallen state, it is quite possible that it may be absorbed in a love of Jesus. Happy is the soul who practices unselfish love of God. It is a virtue that is rare, even amongst religious, for it is human to want to be pleasing to ourselves rather than to God.

A true religious covets the unselfish love that Mary of Magdala possessed. How may it be acquired? Scarcely by individual effort, but rather by permitting God to do with us as He pleases. When I say permitting God I mean also permitting those who represent God, namely, our Superior and Confessors. We should not be bent upon finding out their reasons for direction, but humbly submit to their judgment. True, such humility is prompted only by the grace of God, aided by our own efforts, but God gives to those who ask, for has He not said: *Ask and you shall re-*

ceive. A true religious is entitled to look for comfort and support from her Superiors. Have we not given into their keeping our wills? Do we not hope that we are perfectly understood by them? Notwithstanding this it often happens that something occurs which is difficult for us to understand. Surely our Superior or our Confessor has misunderstood either us or our motive. Are we really what they think we are? Are we deceiving ourselves or them? True confidence in God or our Superior will not permit us to question their decisions. Let the sharp sword of obedience pierce our souls and purify them. If our shortcomings be true, should we not be happy that the servant of God make them known to us? If there is some mistake, the sorrow and pain of the suspense is beneficial to our souls. Such chastisement helps to keep us in subjection and from error, from which none of us are secure even though we have lived years in religion without deliberate sin. Sorrow is indeed necessary for us all. Our Blessed Mother knows her children, she understands our poor fail hearts, and she guards them from the snares of the devil by sending angels of light to pierce our souls with the sword of sorrow. Some of us do not allow the angels to fulfill their missions. Our coldness to the higher life keeps them away. We steel ourselves to indifference so that the sword of sorrow shall not pierce our soul. Perhaps we even look for sympathy outside of God. Now, my dear Sisters, let us not be unwise but wise virgins. Let us ever be on the watch for the coming of the Bridegroom. If we are anxious for

our souls to grow more beautiful in the sight of God are we not foolish if we prevent His representatives from cultivating sanctity within us? Do not say that you do not hinder them for you do most signally, when by your pride, or your coldness, you prevent your Superior from accomplishing what they deem best for you. We can scarcely imagine a Superior so imperfect that she did not love the souls of those in her charge and desire most ardently their spiritual advancement. Indeed, we should look with sorrow upon the Superior who would make use of the Sisters for the material good of the Community whilst neglecting their spiritual benefit.

Never forget that the purifying sword of sorrow comes to us both through holy and unholy means. It is given to us sometimes to suffer even through our Superior just as we are often tried by those whom we tried to serve. Never forget that suffering is the portion of the Spouse of Jesus. It is her life work and she must consecrate herself to it. She must strive to imitate the gentle Christ in her work who always sought to console and relieve the sick and the suffering. How can she herself console others unless she knows what sorrow is? She must be able to feel in every little way what Jesus and Mary suffered when on earth. When we think of all that Jesus suffered when on earth, and the sword of sorrow that passed through the heart of His Mother, how consoling to all who love Jesus and Mary to know that their sufferings are now glorified in heaven and that never again as long as Al-

mighty God reigns shall either of Them know sorrow. This holy thought should be our consolation in all our afflictions and we may add to it the hope that some day our sorrow may be transformed into the same heavenly joy that Jesus and Mary now possess. We can never comprehend the full meaning of those words of the Holy Ghost: And thy own soul a sword shall pierce. We have been told by those who listened to it that the cry of one pierced to the heart is most terrifying in its horror. What must it have meant for Mary to see her Divine Son suffering. She followed in His foot-steps the dolorous way of the Cross, she looked into His blood-stained face on the streets of Jerusalem, she climbed the heights of Calvary, she annointed His sacred body ere it was placed in the tomb. Truly it is said that Mary suffered Martyrdom without giving up her life!

We must not, however, continue the meditation of Mary's sufferings for this is not the place. We must continue to give our thoughts to the Spouse of Jesus crucified and her holy mission of personal and vicarious suffering. A true Spouse of Jesus must follow the lamb of God on earth in as much as she hopes to follow Him in Heaven. Following means literally walking in another's foot-steps, imitating their actions, or being guided by their example. Following the Man of Sorrows, therefore, necessarily means a life of poverty, subjection and contradiction. God, however, will strengthen His Spouse for her brief time of pain here on earth, and, if she be faithful, reward her with a blissful eternity.

That eternity must come! Are we not in it now? Fleeting time is but a small portion of everlasting eternity. Once we are born into the world we never die. True, after a few years, our mortal body will be separated from our soul but that soul will live on forever. Is it not literally true, then, that our soul is now in eternity only awaiting the hour when it shall put off the corruptible body. Then shall the true Spouse of Jesus rejoice forever and forever. She mourned with Him on earth, but in Heaven her mourning shall be turned into joy. On earth she was His Spouse, but in Heaven she shall be a glorified spirit worshipping before His throne.

What a deep sorrow it is to the true Spouse of Christ to see His children of earth suffering. The heart of Jesus permits His earthly Spouse to participate in the sufferings of others, and even to suffer herself, in order that she may appreciate the infinite sorrow of the Man-God. Each of us, dear Sisters, have our own sanctuary of sorrow. It is a holy place. It is sacred to our love, and He alone has entrance. Others would profane it and it would no longer be a meeting place of two hearts—two hearts alone—Jesus and His Spouse. How He cultivated that holy love in the heart of His beloved! First He created the little spark of life, then he nourished it with His own most precious body and blood, then He made it all His own by the wonderful vows of religion, and surely we hope that one day He will consecrate it in His eternal home. Ah, it is in the communion of sorrow that the soul becomes true, pure and noble. Small sorrows may fret and irritate

us, but it is the great sorrows which God Himself permits, that bring us more closely to Him. Are you fearful that He will not come to console you? Consider the lilies of the fields, how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is today, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe: how much more you, oh ye of little faith? Oh, dear Jesus, give thy Spouses strength to bear with love the little and the great pains of life: give them fortitude that they may be crucified body and soul with Thee, so that after their mortal soul puts off their mortal body they may be one with Thee, dear Lord! Jesus loves to be in close communion with the child He makes His bride, but the Spouse of Christ must ever remember that that union must be on Calvary's cross. True, it means long-watching and long-suffering to stand always beneath the shadow of Calvary. Are we really unhappy, however, in our suffering? Surely not! We are the happiest creatures on earth. Little by little we nerve our bodies to voluntary mortifications, and we school our souls even in involuntary sufferings. Willingly we place the cross on our shoulders. Let us then make our daily suffering of trials and sorrows more and more generous no matter what God sends us. As long as we know we must sorrow let us try to be cheerful in the suffering. Let us strive to be more and more glad to suffer for the love of our crucified Lord. Sweet Jesus, strengthen my will! Help me to bear with

fortitude the pains of this poor body, the sufferings of this anxious soul. It is hard to endure earth's sorrows but, Jesus, it is easy when Thy holy spirit strengthens our will! Life then grows sweet and we feel it worth living, when living thus in union with Thee.

Contentment, my dear Sisters, comes not from without for it is born from within. When a soul is united with the spirit of God it cannot know unhappiness. When the spirit of God over-shadows us we are living in imitation of our crucified Master. There is a peace and happiness in our souls that we could not have in the greatest ease and luxury. United with Christ we grow in likeness to Him until the great day when He Himself with joy and gladness will present us to His eternal Father!

The highest form of religious life is the Spouse of Jesus crucified. What matter when or where they are nailed to the cross as long as it is done willingly and generously in union with their Lord? In what climate? In what country? Amongst what kind of people? No matter as long as the great sacrifice of the Spouse of Jesus is voluntarily made for the love of our crucified Saviour. Who now would wish to desecrate her holy sacrifice by looking back to kinsfolk or native land? "He who loves father, mother, brother or sister more than Me is not worthy of Me!" (Luke 14:26.)

Praise be to God the thousands and thousands of holy virgins who have left all to follow in the footsteps of Jesus! Praise be to God that they have been so generous in their sacrifices! Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard. (I Cor. 2:9.)

CHAPTER TWO

PENANCE

One of the great works of the Holy Ghost is the calling of the Brides of Christ. As in most of His great works in the world, the Holy Ghost uses our Blessed Mother for this purpose. It is to Her that He has confided all His chosen ones. After she has taken them to Herself, the Mother of God instills humility into the hearts of Her children, according to the great work with which they are to be entrusted and to the heights of perfection to which they are to attain. First of all the Mother of God makes Her children understand that they are of the earth, earthly. She makes them understand their own nothingness before the operations of the Holy Ghost works upon them. After the Mother of God has taken the chosen ones of the Holy Ghost to Herself, they are then brought forth into the world as the fruit of their spiritual Mother who has nurtured them close to Her heart, imbued them with Her spirit and impressed upon their souls all the virtues that a mother might give to the child of her heart.

We know the mystical life that follows in some of these souls chosen by the Holy Ghost under the protection of the Blessed Virgin. Mary trains them, watches over their hidden life just as she did

with the Child of Nazareth. She teaches them how to go forth with Jesus, doing good everywhere. She leads them to the altar constantly, that they may frequently eat of the Bread of Life, and, as it were, live upon Jesus, for such is His desire that they should drink of the blood that begets virgins.

It is necessary that these chosen ones grow stronger day by day, in their spiritual life, because, just as they have their moments of transfiguration, so will they also have their vigils in Gethsemane. In these moments of trial even the Blessed Mother withdraws Her gentle presence, that had hitherto made everything so sweet. And yet the soul needs this purifying process of humiliation, before it can be strengthened to walk bravely in the footsteps of Jesus. Oh, humiliation! how bitter and yet how sweet! My dear Sisters, this is the place to meditate upon humility. Humility should be the aim of every true religious, no matter what her position, and yet few of us arrive at a true estimate of it. Few of us have an idea of its loveliness. How sweet the odor of its perfume to God and how should we not strive to practice it. Humility seems to permeate the very existence of a true Religious with an atmosphere so holy that almost unconsciously her presence is a benediction and her harvest of souls for God beyond number.

Humility is gained only by humiliations. These come through the onward course of the Passion of Our Lord which we too have to endure, after we have left our vigil in Gethsemane. The humiliations endured there were between our souls and

those with whom we have to live when we are learning our own weakness. By God's own ordinance we rose to go forth truly humbled from our prostrate condition, from the affliction that taught us our own nothingness. Now we have to face humiliations before the world. May God help us! Shall we suffer them or faint beneath them! May the strengthening angels of the Passion bring us assistance! Let us acknowledge humbly and honestly that without the help of God or those who are deputed by God to assist us we will fail in our efforts. "Oh, God, come to my assistance! Oh, God, make haste to help me!" Let us be armed with this prayer as we daily go forth to carry our cross.

"Ecce Homo! Behold the Man!" Behold Our Saviour about to take up His cross! How humble and resigned He looks as Pilate presents Him to the people. Let us ask of Him the same spirit of humility and resignation as we set out upon our daily work. We have called Him by the sweet name of Jesus over and over again. "My Jesus Mercy! Jesus Help Me!" And yet, though this picture of the humble Christ should be borne upon our hearts every day, how have we spent the day when we come to our examination of conscience at the end of it? Our souls, our body and our mind have each had its appointed cross, rebuff, contradiction or pain of some kind. How have we borne with them? A slighting word was said to us and although we did not rebel outwardly, yet the blood ran faster in our veins and our heart felt injured.

A blow would have caused less pain and yet we might have profited by the word that hurt us so much had we remembered Jesus and the indignities shown Him, both in word and act, but we lost the opportunity and so the Bride of Christ missed the entrance of her Spouse. If, with a humble heart, she had accepted that unkind, and perhaps insulting word; if she had remembered how Jesus stood silent when the mob cried out to crucify him, how much more happily could she have placed her head upon her pillow and thanked her Mother and her guardian angel for the opportunity given her of proving that she was not the Spouse of Jesus in name only, but in word, in deed and in truth. This is the moment when Jesus comes to embrace His spouse. Do not refuse the proffered embrace. What can the embrace of a crucified God be but suffering of mind or body? We should be wise enough to bear contempt and indignities, if God is so good as to give them to us, with sweetness and love for the sake of Jesus. Without this our religious life becomes mere sentiment and our name an empty title. Shall we be thought harsh if we say that the Spouse of Jesus Crucified is but a whited sepulchre of Jesus Crucified, if she does not strive to live in harmony with the Lord; which means suffering unkind words patiently, ills of the body with resignation, and spiritual failure with fortitude. If we are not striving for religious perfection along these lines, then we are faithless to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and to the maternal promptings of the Mother of our divine Saviour.

Beginning this chapter we told you that one of the great works of the Holy Spirit in God's church was the calling of chosen creatures who are especially selected by God to be united to our incarnate Savior. Those virgins who say with St. Agnes, "I can have no other love but Jesus Christ." It is not of ourselves that we can be thus wholly detached from creatures, but it is by God's grace alone. We must, however, do our part and that consists in self-denial, self-abnegation and humble penance. We shall not be pure without self-denial, nor shall we be anything but ordinary women unless we are mortified in all our thoughts and words and actions. Oh, God, seer into the hearts of Thy chosen ones Thy holy word! Let them hear Thy voice as did the multitude of pure souls, who, because they were mortified, were honored to lay down their lives and shed their blood for Jesus. They sprang out of the Passion and are the flowers of the Holy Ghost, produce of the precious blood.

Look, Sisters, at that bleeding body bound to the column! It is quivering with pain as the lashes fall upon the shrinking form. There is deep joy, however, in the soul of Jesus because out of His shame and suffering are to spring those virgins who would follow in the footsteps of the Lamb of God. Yes, Religious Vocations sprang from the Scourging at the Pillar. Though all the blood of Christ was shed for the salvation of mankind, yet may we say that the blood of Christ shed at the Column of the Scourging was especially poured out

that His chosen ones might be sanctified. It was at the Pillar of His Scourging, dear Sisters, that Christ, by His humiliation and suffering, thought of us and merited our vocation for us. By the blood He then shed He would detach us from the world, and attach us to Himself just as He was bound to the pillar. Are we not bound to Him by holy Vows? Would any of us attempt to undo the bonds that bind us to Him?

If any of these thoughts seem repugnant or if we think our religious life hard, then must we be on our guard. The religious life is hard if led without Jesus, but easy if obedient to His yoke; My yoke is sweet, my burden light. May God make us constant, make us firm and strong in our resolutions! Let us beg our Superiors to be firm with us, even severe, providing they assist our weak, vacillating wills. Is it not true that Superiors have Grace from God to help us provided we are obedient and submissive. God never gives any one an office, or a work to do for Him, without giving them the necessary Grace; My Grace is sufficient for thee. True, Superiors may not lead us as we would like, but usually what we like is not the best for us. "Thou shalt be led whither thou wouldst not" shall be said to every soul entering religion, and we are most safe with those Superiors, who, regarding not the opinion of those around them, lead us where we would not. If we are wise we will cherish this thought. We may fall in the moment of trial and rise up in rebellion, but we will make up by humble consecration. But this is not enough. We must

ask and obtain leave to do penance. We should continually mortify our senses, which are constantly tempting us to sin. I cannot repeat too often the necessity of penance. The Catechism teaches ordinary Christians that our natural inclinations are prone to evil from our very childhood and if not corrected by self-denial they will certainly carry us down to hell.

There are numberless souls now in hell, deprived of the presence of God forever, because they were not able to do penance on earth. Are not many of them souls who embraced the religious state, which is a state of penance, and then afterwards refused to live up to it. Oh, God, come to my assistance! oh, God, make haste to help me! Listen to the words of a disciple of St. Philip pouring out his soul full of love for the suffering of the heart of God. Describing the agony of mental suffering, which forced the blood from the sacred veins in great drops, he said; Jesus saw his Brides, his Spouses whom he had wedded to Himself in the embraces of the demon. I can say no more, my children, it is too horrible! At times God permits us to enter into the bleeding heart of Jesus in our holy meditations. It is indeed an agonizing experience, and often we turn fainting away from it, but rather should we regard the suffering of Jesus that goes so far toward saving our own souls, and the souls of those whom we love.

Oh, Sisters, would that we were wise! Let us pray daily for the coming of the Holy Ghost into our hearts! Mary, Spouse of the Holy Ghost,

send him to your chosen ones that He might impress upon their hearts the spirit of penance. God is your portion forever; give Him your heart with the hope that your gift will be accepted; a contrite and a humble heart God will not despise.

Oh Mother of our suffering Savior, keep us whom thou has chosen faithful unto death! We are striving to follow earnestly in the footsteps of Christ here on earth, so help us to endure the vigil of Gethsemane, to climb the heights of Calvary, to stand sorrowfully beneath the cross with the women of Galilee—faithful unto the end!

Then may we one day walk in the Courts of Heaven, "following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," gazing forever on the transfigured face of our glorified Savior and uniting our voices with the eternal *sanctus, sanctus, sanctus* of the angels who throng about the throne of the infinite God of Love.

CHAPTER THREE

MORTIFICATION

In speaking of the interior life we have wandered into the subject of penance. We spoke of the world within ourselves, which we are to make a special garden, a paradise where God expects to meet us and hold converse with us, but the thought of that world within ourselves must necessarily induce the thought of penance, because the interior life cannot be sustained without it. As Religious we want the soul to have entire dominion over the body, but that cannot be done without mortification. Little by little, the Mother of God will help us to be wholly mortified. Of course we always put before ourselves a high ideal, and as a result we are somewhat discouraged when we do not live up to the ideal. Discouragement is most dangerous to the soul; it shows a great want of humility, which is knowledge of ourselves. Whenever we fail we should accustom ourselves to say: "It's just like me! It is a wonder I did not do worse!"

The foundation of the interior life is to remember that we are but an atom that God chose out of millions to do a special work for Him to be a Spouse of Jesus. This is our ideal. We are too honest, please God, not to know what is required of us, and how far we are from having attained the perfection that our state admits and exacts. We are

not better because we are not sufficiently mortified. We do not trouble to guard our thoughts, to concentrate every heart throb to God, to keep alight the lamp of love which should ever burn brightly before the tabernacle where Jesus loves to dwell.

We must not expect that this life of perfection is to be attained with the putting on of a holy habit, or even when the first vows are made, but we must constantly strive for it, looking upon it as a fault when we are negligent and keeping up a strict watch over ourselves both day and night. We must not weary over this interior life. It may be to us a desert or a paradise. To the unmortified it is a desert, to the humble soul it is a true paradise. We go daily to our different works, for it is necessary in our active Orders that we go out from the Convent, but yet how the true Religious rejoices in returning home from her errand of Mercy because it is a work well done. It is the same with the nun who does not leave the Convent. She has labors to fulfill which she does cheerfully, no matter how hard or distressing they may be. All these actions are done through holy obedience, and no sooner does the true religious leave the parlor, the study, the dispensary or kitchen than she immediately, even before she reaches the chapel, adores her divine Master. There He is waiting for her, as is described in the Legend Beautiful. Had she remained in her loving colloquy with her Lord, when duty called her away from this happy communion, her love would not have manifested Himself to her. The poet tells us in his beautiful legend how

the monk left our Lord in his cell with some reluctance, knowing that he was going out to fulfill a duty. On his return he found Our Lord waiting for him in a brilliant vision of light. His face was radiant and when the poor monk prostrated himself in adoration before Our Lord, the Master said to him: "Hadst thou stayed I would have fled."

How often, dear Sisters, shall we find the same circumstance in our daily lives, if we do not neglect our Divine Guest but pay court at all hours, returning quickly after each distracting duty to offer Him the work we have finished and to beg a blessing on the work we are about to commence. Oh how our dear Jesus loves those who watch diligently at the gates! We keep alive the fire of love in our hearts by this attention to our dear Lord. This pleases Him more than all our exterior works, though they delight Him, and give Him glory, according to the love with which we accomplish them. The Blessed Trinity is enamoured with the soul that resembles, even in an imperfect way, God's own life. Yes, even in this world there are lives that are inexpressibly pleasing to the Most High. Souls who, in the midst of their exterior works, live an interior life in union with God; souls who are pure and who find within themselves that wonderful presence of God, their creator, which inspires them with holy fear, which is the beginning of wisdom.

May God preserve us from defiling the temple within us, and may the Holy Trinity dwell there as on a throne. Let us adore the triune God and offer our homage to Father, Son and Holy Ghost! We

know our homage is not like the adoration of the Thrones—those beautiful spirits, the third choir of adoring angels—but it is according to our weakness and our infirmity. Our good God disdains not our homage, for it gives Him ineffable delight. We know very well all this is true, dear Sisters, and yet through our own negligence we often disappoint God, and indeed many times disappoint ourselves.

We lose the joy of the Holy Spirit when the brightness of our souls is dimmed by the passing clouds of our self-love, which always pass over the soul that is not faithful to the promptings of the interior life. The interior life is neglected because of lack of mortification. It takes time and patience to trim the sanctuary lamp, to bring fresh flowers to the altar, to beautify the House of God. There are some indeed who take great pains in keeping in good order the various apartments under their charge, but perhaps they take no pains whatever to adorn the temple of their hearts, or keep clean and pure the sanctuary of their souls, or in kindling the light of love that first burned in their hearts when they heard the voice of our Lord calling: "My child, give me thy heart!" Ah, me! a half-hearted nun is not happy, she cannot be. Such a one, however, can rise from a negligent condition, and even set a neglected sanctuary in order. God grant that the sanctuary of that soul has been neglected and not desecrated. Mortification will again raise it to fervor. Recollection will likewise assist, for we cannot be recollected without morti-

fication. Distractions of the senses naturally please us. Our own thoughts are very dear to us. To refrain ourselves from distractions and think only of what is pleasing to Our Lord may seem hard, but it soon grows sweet to the soul that is mortified. Remember, however, that after laboring for years, and attaining some advance in the spiritual life, nay, even finding it a Paradise where God indeed holds sweet communion with the soul, as He did in the beginning with our first parents, we are ever apt through want of humility to grow lax and to fall low. Dear Sisters, let us be wise and be warned, as we see examples of how low souls can fall who were once so high in God's favor. Let us be fearful lest our fervor grow cold, or that we may lose our spiritual appetite for the things of God. Commence anew, let us slowly but surely begin to practice mortification.

Let us, likewise, commence to spiritualize our obedience. True, we may be obedient now, but let us put more love into it. Mortification is again necessary to accomplish this. Indeed it is only when trying to offer up every act, to watch every thought, to have purity of intention in all that we do, when we are really urging on our shrinking spirit that we find what mortification it requires. We see how much we did in the past that was not pure gold, but were acts of our own will. Human restraint in our actions makes them more irksome but they are religious acts because they attract God, and what more do we ask than to keep our Divine Love with us. He will help to fight the battle

against sloth and selfishness. We must live in this world for Jesus alone, but we must meet Him where He loves to meet His own—in the Sanctuary of Suffering. It is there Jesus meets His beloved ones and yet it is a sanctuary many dread to enter. Here Jesus presses close to Himself pure generous souls who enter willingly, who flinch not as the pain pierces, but love the blow as it strikes. They seek shelter in Jesus' wounds for strength to endure what they know they could not bear alone. These souls are safe. They have indeed found a shelter from the world, sin and strife. They have already entered into the joy of their Lord. Yes, for the joy of Jesus on earth was suffering, shame, and humiliations. The delight of His mortal life was to suffer. His flesh was human, and it felt the smart of the lash and the indignity of the blow, but "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." Yes, dearest Lord, His longing was satisfied though He allowed His nature to shrink as ours to encourage us and comfort us, for we may long for suffering and yet at times shrink from it. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord, Spouse of Jesus, you should know this joy of earth. It is your right. No one can take it from you. Only you can hinder God's good designs, and you only are the one who can shut this Sanctuary, and thus you know not the embrace of your Spouse. Enter into the joy of your Lord. Cry to Him, Wounded Flesh of Jesus unite me to Thee.

Spouse of Jesus, meet your Spouse in the Nuptial Chamber, the Sanctuary of Suffering, and it will be well with thee. Thy children shall be as olive branches round the Table of the Lord and He shall call them blessed. The pain will soon be over, the crucifixion of the flesh; that wounded spirit; those nerves quivering with anguish of mind and body. These ordeals are painful, but not half so painful as the excessive indulgences of the so-called pleasures of the senses. Bruise your flesh a little. Are you not a sacrifice to God? Do not fall in with the foolish idea of the age that penance cannot be performed. We have to be an example to the world, whether enclosed or active. God will give us grace to keep our rule. Let not the general tendency to relaxation creep into the cloistered walls. Keep up your good practices. Perform your penances. Break not the enclosure to please the age. God will and God has raised up Orders to do His works in the world. You should continue to pray and suffer and mortify yourself. Dear Sisters, Spouses of Jesus, who, by the will of God are placed in the world, think not that your work suffices for all penance.

Ah, no, listen not to the arguments that are used to persuade you. You are an enclosed garden to your God. Allow not your enclosure to be broken. Your body is His temple, your soul His sanctuary. Your heart must be pure, unspotted from the world. You must do penance. How are you to resemble your Spouse if your flesh is so pampered that it cannot bear a blow? You need to do penance—voluntary penance—to keep your com-

pact, to be in the world and not of it. You have to teach the world the doctrine of Christ, and this includes penance. You cannot speak of what you do not understand. Holy Spirit, enlighten Thy Spouses! Give them the Gift of Wisdom from Thy Throne of Grace! Let their mystical robe be studded with jewels! Let Thy chaste Spouses lead angelic lives crucified to the world and dead to human affections, living only for Thy love, despising all other affections, desiring earnestly Thy esteem, living their lives but for Thee, that dying their deaths may become a holocaust of Sacrifice delightful to Thee. Pour forth Thy Spirit and our hearts shall be regenerated, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Dear Sisters, remember time flies! Are we at work? Yes, we have many works. I will not say too many, but there may be too many if they hinder us from our one Great Work. We must be saints, and to be saints we must do penance. Our works alone will not sanctify us. They will not, indeed, sanctify others if we are not in union with Our Love in His Life on earth and imitate His love of suffering. We with our weak wills, our cowardly natures, our shrinking bodies and proud and sensitive souls could not live this life nor die the death of the true Spouse of Jesus if left to ourselves. God alone can make this possible. He will, He longs to, if we will only let Him and we will. Dear Mother Mary, we promise Thee that we will! In life and death we will be in union with Jesus. He is ours and we are His!

PART THREE

THE SPOUSE OF JESUS GLORIFIED

CHAPTER ONE

THE REWARD

“I have inclined my heart to do thy justifications forever—for the reward.” (Ps. 118:112.)

God is just, and will reward each one according to his works and He wishes us to look forward to the reward. He desires us to be grateful for the rich reward He has prepared in the next life in return for the little we have done here on earth. Even in the world it is so. Does not a kindhearted person who prepares a pleasure for another desire that that person should be pleased? When we prepare a fete for children and tell them beforehand, how glad we are to see their eyes sparkle in the joy of anticipation. So it is with Our Good God. Having prepared a great joy for the little momentary struggles we go through, are we then not to look forward to it? Besides, it is not only our own joy but we rejoice to know that those near and dear, whom we have loved and tried to help, will, if they are faithful, receive also their reward. There will be no more breaking hearts and grief-stricken souls which we have so sorrowed for. Yes, we shall rejoice in the happiness of those about us, and our joy will overflow because we know we are a delight to God for evermore.

What are we to be in Heaven? I, an atom, am to accomplish a certain task for my God. He chose

me for a particular purpose. I can frustrate or fulfill His dear designs. Consider how an artist chooses one piece of marble rather than another from which to form a statue. So God chooses one atom rather than another to accomplish His purpose. God drew me out of nothing. God breathed into me Life. God has given me grace to do a glorious work for Him. We are in God's Church Militant, the Spouses of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, Spouses of Jesus Crucified, not in word but in deed and in truth. Let each one of us examine our conscience. Does my body bear the marks of the Crucified? Has My Spouse embraced me? Have I been ever true and brave, or have I been cowardly? Am I joyful in suffering? Do I esteem it an honor? Is my soul unselfish, solely bent on God and His?

The Spouse of Jesus Crucified! Ah, the name is beautiful! We must not think, however, that because we bear this name we have done our part. What does it imply, we ask once more? That we have to live for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament—live with Him, feeding and strengthening our souls with Him. Indeed, has He not bade all Christians to do this—"Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you shall not have life in you." "My flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed." Sisters, we can alone be pure by means of the Precious Blood. Only by means of His Sacrament of love can we live up to our high estate. The Blessed Sacrament is held aloft as we pronounce our vows. It is the pledge of our union. We make our vows and

we are united to our love. Who, henceforth, consecrates our souls as chosen sanctuaries. He will live in our hearts as He remains in the Tabernacle. Dear Sisters, Jesus, knowing our need, gives Himself to help us on our way.

Jesus, my own! These words are a consolation to us here on earth, but what will they mean to us when this life has passed away, and Eternity commences. The joy will be ever fresh. Jesus, my all, Thou art mine for all eternity! Thou hast given Thyself to me! I long for Eternity to thank Thee, to love Thee! Oh Holy Virgins, St. Agnes, St. Cecelia, St. Catherine, come to my aid! I am confused before you, but I rejoice in your great joy! I offer again and again Thy merits, Oh my Sweet Jesus, to supply my deficiencies. Oh My Beloved, I desire not to live but if I live I desire only to suffer—Thy Grace supporting me. Thus would I wish to correct the many defects of my life. My Jesus, I plead with you. Have pity on me and restore to me that which I have lost through ignorance or human frailty. Sweet Jesus, I plead my unfitness, yet must I be true and acknowledge how Thou hast helped me. Would that I had been more faithful to thy inspirations and listened more attentively for Thy sweet Voice. Forgive Thy poor weak creature and let not my unworthiness hinder those whom Thou hast entrusted to my care.

The Fight is Over and Death Comes to the Spouse of Jesus.

Death! Yes, but death means Life—Eternal Life! Most of us have known one saintly soul in

this life. We have most of us mourned over the death, the precious death, of one beloved by God and Man. It is ended. That life so lovely, that soul which was such a wonderful instrument in the hands of its Creator, and whose music was so sweet, a grand melody—Pathetic, Sublime, Mournful, Sorrowing, ever triumphant! And now the last “Amen” has been sung. The last “Amen.” No more will that sweet music enter our hearts, but its echo lives within us, making us long to be a joy to God in this life and a glory to Him in Eternity. Making us pray to avoid that which is unholy lest we cause discord and offend our God instead of pleasing Him.

Our God has been especially good to us and favored us in a way we cannot know in this life. He has given us the grace to give ourselves to Him. What have we given up and what have we received in return? God has given us a special light to see what a glorious thing it is to give the life He gave to us back to Himself. And then—in exchange for this little soul and body—He gives Himself. Yes even in this life, before our death, Jesus gives Himself to us. What does this mean? Jesus is ours. Sisters, let us each say to herself, “Jesus is mine, my own!” Look at that adorable face and whisper, “Jesus, you are mine, my very own.” The young virgin Agnes said this and felt it. Ah, would that we could feel as she did. Jesus is mine. I can have no other Love but Jesus Christ! I love. I am loved. Not with earthly love, but with Infinite love. His eyes are bent on me for I am His. I

possess Him in life and in death we shall be united in a way we cannot understand now. If I live alone for Him in this world He is mine for all Eternity.

Dear Sisters, we need not, we must not fear the passage into Eternity. Jesus Himself will be our Guide. It is glorious to Him that we should make a grand act of Hope and Trust. That we, who have striven to be his helpers on earth, should, at the hour of Death, be helped and succored by Him in an especial manner. We will pray for that hour when Jesus comes to claim His own. That soul is already entirely His that is free from all attachments of this earth, pure by means of a life of mortification and self-abnegation. When the Divine Reaper comes it is ready.

The constant contradictions, misunderstandings, which we have to bear, if borne with patience and humility, the constant watchfulness over every movement of the body, and of the mind, are the ties which bind the Spouse of Jesus Crucified to her Lord interiorly as well as exteriorly. The true Spouse of Jesus has no ties to earth and self, to break at the hour of death. She is ready to be transplanted, and with what love her Divine Spouse will press her to His bosom is known only to Himself. Those near to the Sacred Heart echo its joy, and the "Quae est ista" is answered with joy by those innumerable voices and the Bride rejoices in the happiness of Her Lord.

This is for you and for me, dear Sisters. It will soon come—that short, short span of life will soon be over and we will enter into Eternity. What

that Eternity is no man knoweth, for we cannot see God in this life. It seems to me we could not live on earth if we saw Our Dear Lord adored and loved as He should be. The joy of our hearts would be too great. Imagine if every part of the world was crowded with human beings and Jesus appeared, borne by the Choirs of Thrones, and every heart bounded with love and every voice cried out Hail, Jesus, our King! Our Lord and Master! Dear Sisters, could you or I bear the sight? It seems to us that our hearts which have so often sorrowed for Jesus, and have been pierced with grief for Him, could not bear to live on through the rapture caused by the sight of millions and millions of human beings saluting Jesus as their King. If our human sight was increased so that we could see all over this vast globe, and our hearing made so acute that we could hear from pole to pole, and we saw and heard innumerable people all employed in praising God, even in this mortal life, and could hear the earth echo and re-echo with a cry of praise to their Lord Jesus, the Conqueror of Sin and Death, what should we feel?

Ah, then, what must Heaven be like! We need thus to look up to Heaven to recognize it as the only country where we really can live as Spouses of Jesus Crucified, detached from the world only desiring to live a short time on earth in the most perfect manner so as to give the greatest joy to our God in the next life. Keeping our hearts detached from country, place or person we will live purely as chaste Spouses of Jesus, and thus fulfill the in-

junction of the Holy Ghost we have referred to so often. "Harken my daughter and incline thine ear. Forget thy people and thy father's house for the King hath greatly desired thy beauty." Think of it, dear Sisters, as you kneel before the Tabernacle, for you have Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in all your convents, although there may be exceptions, yet the rule of most Orders provides that the Spouse of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament live under the same roof with her dear Lord.

Of course temporary absences from the convent are necessary in many active Orders, but, dear Sisters, Jesus knowing in His great wisdom our great need of Him, and that we cannot remain always under the same roof with Himself as do so many of His favored Spouses, gives us the special grace to keep Him in our hearts always. He seems to animate some especially with this indwelling of Himself. It is the Infant Jesus who seems to live within those of Mary's children who, by their fidelity to grace and their rules, prove they are Jesus' own true Spouses. This stage of Jesus' life suits all times—waking, sleeping and at recreation. The Infant Jesus reposes in their hearts. Weary nights are sweetened by His presence. Feasts and recreations have a similitude to the days of original innocence and this constant union with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, this appeal to "Dear Little Jesus" at all times renders the soul stronger for those hours which the Spouse of Jesus Crucified must spend with Him on Calvary. Ah glorious life! Sweet vocation! Gift of God!

My God, I thank Thee from the innermost depths of my heart. I thank Thee as I would have wished to thank Thee when You brought me into existence. Thy Eternal Love has wished that I would lead this life for Thee. From all eternity Thou hast decreed that I should be a joy to Thee and by Thy grace, I will obey Thee. Therefore, I look forward to Heaven. Sisters, let us look up. Mary, Our Mother, reigns on high. Look up and long to follow, faithful to God's designs as she was—blessed above all women. Be generous, be in earnest in the very smallest occurrences of life if you would be with your Mother. Walk as she did. Look, in her train countless virgins follow! How glorious they are. If you would be one of them, walk as she did. They have marks of special beauty which they won on their earthly journey. They loved pains and sufferings of soul and body. They suffered for others in union with their Lord. Love beautified their work and their rest. Ah then! Look up and see Christ's Spouse. Is she not beautiful? Would you not walk with her in Heaven following the Lamb wherever He goes? Then you must walk in Her steps on earth. You must bear the marks on your soul and body of Jesus Crucified. Then, at your death, troops of angels will surround you and angelic voices sing as they bear you to your love—"Hail Spouse of Jesus Glorified" and that salutation will echo and re-echo, for the Mother bids her child welcome and Jesus no longer hides the pent-up love that He showed not on earth,

or, indeed, earth would have been Heaven. His Spouse had received faint glimpses of it, as it were, from time to time, but now in Heaven for evermore she knows she is a glory of Jesus' Passion and that she has fulfilled the will of the Most High.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Thanks be to God! Thanks be to Jesus' Precious Blood! Thanks be to the Mother Christ gave His children! Thanks to the Angels and Saints! Life's battle is over. The Victory won. God's will. God's will alone for evermore. Amen!

CHAPTER TWO

THE BRIDE OF GLORY

We finish this little work of love by glancing again at the Alpha and Omega from Whom we come and to Whom we go. Yes, in that Eternity, where we were conceived in the Mind of God we are to rest forever if we finally persevere. God be praised, for it was by His Grace that we succeeded. There were many failures in the battle of life; many a rent in the Wedding garment which we tried to make, but we repaired them from the merits of the Passion of Jesus our Spouse. We know full well that our thoughts, words and actions were far from perfect. Many a time during our mortal life we had failed our God. We had become deserters from our true colors; we were cowards when the Cross of Christ was presented to us to bear. Still there were other moments, glorious moments, when we rejoiced with the Angels by humble accusations of our faults, by true contrition, by mortifications, and, also, under obedience, by penance.

The Spouse of Jesus Glorified indeed finds in Heaven that not a word or deed performed in union with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, not a word or deed born in union with Jesus Crucified, has passed unnoticed or unrewarded, or without giving Eternal glory to her God for Whom she worked and suffered in these few days of time. It was hard at the time; the unkind or contemptuous word fell

on the soul like the stroke of a lash upon the body, but she remembered she was the Spouse of Jesus Crucified, and she bore it patiently for love of Him. Sickness assailed that body, now so glorious, and the weak flesh quailed before the bitter pain, but she turned to her spouse and received from Him strength to suffer. It is indeed well for her now, for there is a special glory given to her in Heaven in reward for these days of suffering on earth. Ah, well indeed is it with you now, Blessed soul, there is no more mourning or sorrow, for God Himself has wiped away all tears from your eyes and has lifted you up from the valley of tears and placed you with the Blessed to glorify Him for all eternity. You passed through lonely days on earth, dark days, in which shone no glimmer of light, but even in the darkness you clung to the hard wood of the Cross upon which God had placed you and prayed to be resigned to His Holy Will. You thought of the darkness and dereliction of Calvary and united your loneliness with all that was suffered there. Now you are rewarded. It is all over. It was a fearful risk, but you thank God for the great things He did for you. You are the object of His Complacency for evermore. You can rejoice in His love for all eternity; it will never change and you will never change. You are united forever to the unchangeable God. What an inconceivable joy and relief to know that at length, after all our human fickleness, we shall never again alter or change. We always knew, for faith taught it to us, that God was immutable. He changes not, but

we feared ourselves, our fickle changeable nature. We knew how easily we changed, and we lived with the fearful possibility of perhaps losing our God forever.

That bondage of fear is now over; no such dread can ever again disturb our peace. No doubt or trouble can molest us or ruffle the ineffable calm and joy of Christ's chosen Bride. We possess God forever, He has set us free from our prison-house and the Sacred Heart of Jesus rejoices in the trophy of His Passion. The Spouse of Jesus Glorified rejoices not only in her own happiness but after her joy in the knowledge that God delights in her there is no keener bliss than her joy in the happiness of those around her, especially those who are Her Own, Her Own in this sense that her Spouse Who redeemed them made use of Her to co-operate with Him, in saving them. Thus those sufferings of time, have, for all eternity, brought joy to human souls the images of God.

Can we realize what it means? Joy, jubilee, bliss forever. The angels chanting sweet melodies to which the harmony of human hearts are attuned. These Redeemed souls sing songs in Sion, they sing songs of salvation, of the triumphs of their Savior's Precious Blood. The Spouse of Jesus sees her Love in all His Glory, and with heart and soul raised to heights unknown on earth she praises, prays and pleads. She praises God for His goodness to the children of men, she prays for her people that they may love and serve God on earth, in order to possess the joys and happiness of

Heaven; she pleads for sinners on earth, for whom she can no longer suffer, but through those sufferings she possessed such power with God and she presents them to Him, united with His.

We cannot sufficiently praise God for His ways, which are so wonderful, though we, at present, understand them so little. We look forward hereafter to know Him as we are known. The ways of earth are indeed wearisome when they are not referred to Heaven, but it is very sweet when we walk those ways with the intention of lovingly leading to God the souls whom He created, and for Whom Jesus died. When our lives are lived for God, and we walk in the light that He always gives to those who seek it, we can say, with many a saintly Bride of Christ: "Oh, beautiful life that is for God alone!" What matters it if the sufferings are painful, the days long and tedious, nay even the hours, as a holy Spouse of Jesus said in dying, How long He is driving in the third nail! What does it matter. It is all over now and He will be, forever, our reward exceeding great. It is all very short, passing swiftly, as a lightning flash in comparison with Eternity.

Look up then, dear Sisters, from this desert where you walk leaning on your Beloved. He leads you, it is true, along rough paths, through trackless wastes in this world, but you are to follow Him whithersoever He goeth in Heaven. That is the unknown joy which you cannot understand in this world. But this we know, it must be something

that will give Him delight. That is to be our supreme happiness in Heaven, to be a joy to Him Whom we have ever loved above aught else and His joy will be ours. Can we say more? We would wish to, and yet we cannot worthily clothe in words the image of that Eternal Life of Glory.

Let us go to the Heart of Jesus, and there resolve for God's sake, as well as our own, for the sake of those around us, whom we meet everyday, as like our Lord we go about everywhere doing good, for the sake of souls whom we may never know on earth, that we will work and suffer on, generously and cheerfully. Some day we shall find that we have helped to obtain for others that happiness of which it has been said, Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things God hath prepared for them that love Him—and who have served Him and His, in word and deed, and in truth.

Nothing is forgotten. What a wonderful truth to ponder on. We cannot rightly appreciate that marvelous thought—that every incident, no matter how small in our lives, is recorded by the angles above. It would seem almost childish to us to imagine that such trivial incidents are remembered above, but Our Dear Lord's words must always be revered, and they are very clear and to the point. He tells us that a cup of cold water given in His name will have its reward. Even amid the splendors of the Heavenly Court this small act done for His sake will not be forgotten. How many such acts may there not be performed during the day by

the one who truly loves Jesus. What a pity it is that we are not more earnest in forming intentions, which give an inestimable value to the smallest action done for God's sake. We might look at the inanimate creation, and from it learn the great results which come from the smallest and most hidden sources. Nothing is lost. From the insignificant acorn comes the mighty oak, and the minute patient work of unseen insects produce those marvels of beauty, the coral reefs of the Southern Seas. So it is, but in a far higher degree in the spiritual life. The hidden act, the silent prayer, the penance performed unknown to others, are producing effects which would seem to us almost incredible. Yet, the comparisons drawn from the natural world are poor and inadequate. We have our dear Lord's words to teach us how we should value our actions, both good and bad, for if the cup of cold water given in His name is to be rewarded so also have we to give an account of every idle word. When we think of the many idle, and worse than idle words we speak, is not the comparison sufficiently forcible? Yet, if for every idle word we have to render a strict account, we must remember that for every good word we shall receive a reward. Good words do not necessarily mean clever ones, and we should remember that words have wonderful powers for good or evil, and we do not always value them enough. Let us repeat that first chapter of the Gospel of Saint John, with great devotion, and let us make an offering at the beginning of the day for all our words, begging our angel to steep them in the Precious

Blood. If we do this in the morning and strive to renew the offering frequently during the day, how precious will our life become to God. We shall never know its value till Jesus leads his happy Bride through the Courts of Heaven to the Throne of the Eternal Father, to place the crown of glory upon her beatified brow.

How many of the jewels which adorn it have been formed by words, which we have spoken with a pure intention and in union with our Love. Let us look forward to that rewarding day; we may often feel weary of this sad time of struggle, this time when we must sow in tears, but it would cheer us if we thought more of the day of recompense when we shall bring our sheaves of joy. The value of time and of even the least human actions is shown by the exceeding great reward given in that reign of bliss above.

Ah, Blessed Ones, who have gone before; who have fought the good fight; you who have been welcomed by Our Lady to Heaven; you who form part of the glory of the Sacred Humanity, who see Jesus face to face, plead for us, now, that we may also value those hours which the angels bring us, watching us to see that we use them well for God's glory.

Dear Sisters, we have met together, and, though at a distance, we have walked hand in hand many of the paths of life; humility on one side and love on the other have helped us on the royal road of Religious perfection. If we have had such love for each other on earth what will it be when we

reach Heaven? Some souls may have been saved and others sanctified, by the sufferings and sacrifice of the Spouse of Jesus Crucified, which will be one of the greatest joys of the Spouse of Jesus Glorified, as she reigns with her Lord in Heaven. It will seem almost a surprise, for the words of the Gospel have an astonished ring, "Lord, when did we see thee hungry and fed thee; thirsty and gave thee to drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and took thee in? or naked, and covered thee? Or when did we see thee sick or in prison and came to thee?" The answer comes passing sweet, "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren you did it to me." (Matt. 25:37-40.) We love to repeat those words of Jesus, the words of the entranced soul as He sees the fruit of her labors.

Then, Spouse of Jesus Crucified, in the day of darkness, in the day of trial, in the hour when you are condemned, look up for your Spouse is smiling upon you and blessing you. Be very glad for your reward is very great in Heaven. Nothing is forgotten. Think of this, dear Sisters, when you find the struggle so weary; when you are worn with the strife and conflicts of life; the spiritual danger which is ever on the increase; when disease and pain are racking your body, fight on, endure bravely, for God sees. God knows and understands, even when the holy are deceived and you are misunderstood and calumniated. God watches the workings of your heart, its incense of resignation, its outpourings of love, its offerings of the trials permitted. You are all most pleasing in His sight. God sees

and rejoices in the brave generous soul. Nothing is forgotten. These small acts of patience, of mortification, of silence—all are noted. Nothing is forgotten. Praise be to Jesus Christ, blessed be His Holy Name forever, and blessed is the soul who has taken up the Cross, and follows Him in Poverty, Chastity and Obedience.

Take courage, then, for the Eyes of God are bent upon you with inexpressible complacency and love. Together with Christ's priests, His other selves, you are to be the great glory of the Sacred Humanity. Look forward to what you are to be for all Eternity, the Spouse of Jesus Glorified. Do not weary then, in the oft-times bitter fight, the conflict with sin and self, and remember that this is an extraordinary era in the world's history. The Church is passing through a period, which is typifying the Sacred Passion. As our dear Lord spoke with such gratitude of those who had continued with Him in His trials, so God is now blessing tenderly, and helping with unwonted graces, those who have remained faithful to Holy Church, in this Her hour of trial. Be ye faithful unto death, faithful in the path of perfection. You have vowed to leave all; you are very dear to God; you adorn and honor His Church on earth, and if you are faithful you will be Its glory in Heaven.

You will be doubly glorified for having persevered in the way of penance, in the path of perfection, at a time almost unprecedented in the history of the world. The Bark of Peter sails on bravely through the storm, but the storm is no less fearful

and the fight is a deadly one. He who is not with God is against Him, and in how many places dare you, without fearing some disrespect, mention His Name?

In this little work, which we are now concluding, we have striven to follow the Bride of Christ through her life on earth, and now we look up to the Spouse of Jesus Glorified in Heaven. We try to understand, to taste and to see how sweet the Lord is to those who love Him. May He be thanked for those dear ones who have gone before us, and who have fought the battle bravely. From the height to which we have endeavored to follow them we look down upon the plains of earth. Is it with disgust or contempt? Ah, no, for earth enabled them to be what they are—the ransomed trophy of the Passion of Jesus, and a great glory to His Sacred Humanity forever. Blessed indeed is the earth where Jesus' feet have trod, and where He asked others to follow Him. There are some who have trodden, more closely, in those Sacred Steps, following him in Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. Though they often stumbled and were tempted to look back there was One who lifted them up and led them on. One invisible, indeed, to them but visible to the Angels who exclaimed in wonder, "Quae est ista? Who is she who cometh up from the desert, leaning on the arm of Her Beloved?" It is indeed a desert, but what matters that? Any place where Jesus helps us, holds us up, leads us on, is flooded with joy and light. His Presence transforms the darkest and most arid desert

since the day when "earth opened and budded forth a Saviour." We look upon it now, with increasing reverence, for the Lowly One Who has condescended to wed human nature to Himself, has taught others to be lowly and to seek to be united to Him, if, in His great condescension, He would accept their offering, and wed them to Himself.

The Sacred Vows have been made, and they who on earth strove to walk the way of the Blessed, in Meekness, Humility and Obedience, choosing the better part, having been espoused on earth to the Lamb of God, will be eternally honored in Heaven as the Spouse of Jesus Glorified.



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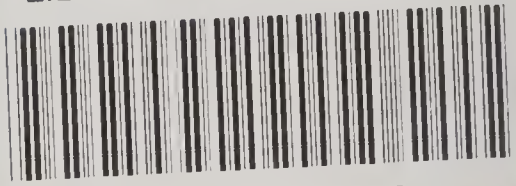
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